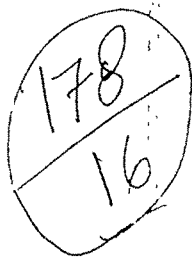


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SHAKESPEARE'S SCEPTICISM

D. C. BISWAS

MANY of the things Keats said about himself may be applied to Shakespeare, and his letters contain revealing comments on Shakespeare's plays. When, for example, Keats said about his determination to make his mind 'a thoroughfare for all thoughts, not a select party', we are reminded of Shakespeare's receptiveness to all kinds of ideas, for none of which he seems to have any marked preference. This anti-doctrinairism is also confirmed by Keats' classic remark that Shakespeare possessed a 'negative capability' i.e. 'capacity to remain in uncertainties etc.'. But Keats could never imagine that Shakespeare's readers also must cultivate the virtue of 'negative capability'; for there are so many contradictory things said about him that the readers are compelled to remain in uncertainties.

To another perceptive comment of Keats I would like to turn as the starting point of my essay, viz., that Shakespeare lived a life of allegory and his works are the comments on it. Although this remark is essentially true, it may not be wise to relate his works too closely to his life as some biographers have done. For example, because there are two shrews in his plays we are not free to assume that Anne Hathway was shrewish; and because the Duke in *Twelfth Night* advises Cesario not to marry a woman older than himself, that Shakespeare regretted his marriage with Anne, who was seven years older than himself. Ivor Brown even argues that Cleopatra's trick of fixing a salted fish on Antony's hook was reminiscent of the Darklady's playing the same trick on Shakespeare. Unfortunately for this theory, Shakespeare derived it from Plutarch's life of Antony. These absurd conclusions apart, it may be reasonable to guess the development of his mind, the impact of certain ideas on him by reading his plays and poems in a chronological order. It is now being increasingly felt that about the turn of the century when Shakespeare was writing the dark comedies and the tragedies he

became more and more concerned with certain ideas than with telling stories or portraying characters. John Florio, the Italian master of the Earl of Southampton, Shakespeare's patron, was preparing his great translation of Montaigne's *Essays* at about this time—the translation which introduced Shakespeare to the works of the French essayist. And critics are now generally agreed that *Hamlet*, *Troilus and Cressida* and *Measure for Measure* are more consonant with the spirit of Montaigne than the other plays; they have also discovered a number of parallel passages in Shakespeare which are echoes of the *Essays*.

I feel that Montaigne may help to provide an intellectual context for Shakespeare's 'problem plays.' Despite the impressive industry with which critics have attempted to track down Shakespeare's debt to Montaigne, none of them have so far tried to relate the unresolved problems of the 'problem plays' to the basic tenet of Pyrrhonism, of which Montaigne was an exponent in the Renaissance. My purpose here is to trace these to the French essayist, marking out simultaneously the stages of his development as a sceptic, which are also reflected in *Troilus and Cressida*, the last of Shakespeare's 'problem plays'.

Before attempting an analysis of the relevant plays I would like to say a few words about the nature of Shakespeare's mind which has affinity with that of Montaigne. In a recent essay published in *Shakespeare Survey*-28, Robert Ellrodt has analysed the quality of self-consciousness in Montaigne and Shakespeare. My approach is somewhat different. I begin with the sonnets which are generally considered to be very rewarding, so far as our quest for Shakespeare the man is concerned. I confess I have my doubts even here. Take for instance the darklady sonnets: I am far from being sure if these were really intended for the darklady, whoever she might be, to read them. No lady, however lax her morals, would tolerate the lover calling her a prostitute—'the bay where all men ride', or stomach the sonnet which begins with—'My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun' and goes on to refer to her 'reeking breath'. However, with this reservation, one might guess that Shakespeare was conscious of his enslavement to a woman whom he hated: 'Th' expense of spirit in a waste of shame, / Is lust in action'. He might also have been conscious of his role as an actor—the role in which he is said to

have been first introduced to the metropolis. Two of his sonnets (110 & 111) may be interpreted as expressive of his contempt for the actor ; for example, the lines 'Made myself a motley to the view / Gored mine own thoughts'...or when he says 'O, for my sake do you with Fortune chide....That did not better for my life provide / Than public means which public manners breed'. These lines have however a wider implication than mere acting and may include his profession as a playwright¹ ; for it is as such that he had to cater to the changing tastes of the time. Are we then to suppose that Shakespeare was disgusted not only with his role as an actor, but, by and large, with his profession as playwright itself ? Thomas Hardy would have us believe so ; (*Life of Hardy* by F.E. Hardy, 1962) and he has his progeny in the new critics. Hardy said that Shakespeare's distinction as a man of the theatre is infinitesimal beside his distinction as a poet, a man of letters and a seer of life. He even went so far as to hazard a prophecy that Shakespeare's plays 'would cease altogether to be acted someday and simply studied'. This however has not come true ; there are more performances of Shakespeare's plays in the twentieth century than before.

Now, if Shakespeare despised his role as actor or playwright, he was not enamoured of the poet either. Not only did he bracket the poet, the lover and the lunatic as 'being of imagination all compact' in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, he had even been contemptuous of the poet : Cinna the poet in *Julius Cæsar* had a grotesque end being torn to pieces by the infuriated mob 'for his bad verse' and the poet who intervened in the quarrel between Brutus and Cassius was dismissed as a frivolous laughing-stock ; the court poet in *The Winter's Tale* was held up to ridicule as a base time-server. And we have it in Touchstone's irony : 'The truest poetry is but feigning'. We should not therefore deduce that Shakespeare had a poor opinion of the poet. One would expect similar ironies in his references to his other profession as actor or playwright. In fact the ability to detach oneself from one's absorbing occupation, to indulge in ironical commentary is a kind of self-awareness of a high order. 'The essence of wisdom', says Bertrand Russell, 'is emancipation' and there is no greater bondage than to one's self or ego.

Shakespeare's greatest characters are most self-analytical. Richard

II, an embryonic Hamlet, perceives how foolishly he has been alienating his subjects, whose favour Bolingbroke won to his great advantage. No body knows better than Hamlet 'what a rough and peasant slave am I' indulging in 'words, words, words' while the world about him is bent on action. The prince of Denmark is throughout capable of directing the irony at himself: 'What, what an ass am I'. ; he discovers like the hero of Sartre that he has been acting the comedy of indignation. Angelo in *Measure for Measure* feels to his great remorse that his defences—the defences he has built up by years of austerities, are breaking down :

O, fie, fie, fie !
What dost thou, or what art thou, Angelo ?

II. 2. 172

* * * *

O place, O form,
How often dost thou with thy case, thy habit,
Wrench awe from fools, and tie the wiser souls
To thy false seeming ! Blood, thou art blood !

II. 4. 12

Instances may be multiplied : In King Lear there is a heightened consciousness of identity which led on to self-knowledge through intense suffering. But there is still a difference : unlike Hamlet the self-consciousness in King Lear does not dissolve identity. It is remarkable that in Montaigne* also one notices the self-analytical mood of mind which leads on to self-condemnation.

How many stupid things I say and reply everyday in my own judgement... If I find a thing unsound, is it not because I myself am unsound ? Am I not myself at fault ? May not my admonition be turned against me ? A wise and divine refrain which scourges the most universal and common error of mankind. Not only the reproaches that we make to one another, but also our reasons and arguments in controversial matters can ordinarily be turned against ourselves ; and run ourselves through with our own weapons... A hundred times a day we make fun of ourselves in the person of our neighbours and detest in others the defects that are more clearly seen in ourselves, and wonder at them with prodigious impudence and helplessness.

III. 8.

So, there is a brooding introspection in Montaigne as in Hamlet ; the difference is that in Hamlet his introspection does not achieve but defeats self-knowledge :

Whether it be
Bestial oblivion or some craven scruple
Of thinking too precisely on th' event
..... I do not know,

IV. 4. 31.

George Santayana³ wonders at the 'satirical humour' of the prince 'playing pranks with respectable ideas'. 'Reason' which should be 'an organ of truth' remains 'inconsequential' with the prince who enjoys 'turning somersaults in the air'. And Kenneth Muir⁴ observes: 'It is a curious paradox that the one intellectual among Shakespeare's tragic heroes should be least able to know why he acts or fails to act'. Could it not be a universal paradox, at least with intellectuals? Critics are generally agreed that so vivid a self-consciousness as Hamlet or Angelo has been endowed with was the result of Shakespeare's having read Montaigne. The dramatist in his creation of such characters might have followed Hamlet's advice to the players and did 'show the very age and body of the time his form and pressure'. My point is that the paradox which is the heart of the mystery in Hamlet as a matter for that in every problem play may be traced to the sceptical stance in the Renaissance.

What is scepticism? In O. E. D. the old name of scepticism was Pyrrhonism. Pyrrho (360-275 B.C.) was the earliest sceptic, although he was no theoretician but a living example of a complete doubter, the man who would not commit himself to any judgment. He maintained that we never know enough to be sure that one course of action is better than another. A story is told that in his youth Pyrrho in course of taking his constitutional one afternoon saw his teacher in philosophy with his head stuck in a ditch. He needed immediate rescue. After contemplating him sometimes Pyrrho walked on maintaining that there was no sufficient ground for thinking that he could do any good by pulling the old man out. Others less sceptical rescued the old man and blamed Pyrrho for his heartlessness. But Pyrrho's teacher true to his principle praised him for his consistency.

The Pyrrhonian movement flourished 500 years after, because of Sextus Empiricus (about 200 A. D.) and mainly in the medical community around Alexandria as an antidote to dogmatic theories. Sextus Empiricus⁵ in his book *Hypotyposes* or 'The Outline of Pyrrhonism' defines scepticism 'as an ability or mental state which

opposes appearances to judgement with the result that, owing to equipollence of the objects and reasons thus opposed, we are brought firstly to a state of mental suspense and next to a state of 'unperturbedness' or quietude'. The basic principle of the sceptic system is that of opposing to every proposition an equal proposition; and as a consequence of this men cease to dogmatize. This state of mind then leads to Ataraxia i.e. happy imperturbability.

The sceptic has the same experience as is said to have befallen the painter Apelles (Alexander's court-painter), who having failed to paint the horse's foam gave up the attempt and flung at the picture the sponge on which he used to wipe the paints off the brush and the mark of the sponge produced the effect of a horse's foam. So too the sceptics were in hopes of gaining quietude by means of a decision regarding the disparity of the objects of sense and of thought, and being unable to effect this they suspended judgement and found that quietude, as if by chance, followed by their suspense.

It was Erasmus' controversy with Martin Luther during the Reformation that brought the arguments and the counter-arguments of the ancient sceptics into full play. The central point of debate was the criterion of truth. Luther had denied the authority of the Pope and the Council on the ground that they were all men and therefore fallible. He asserted the new criterion—the scripture and the conscience. (*The Diet* of Worms* of 1521). Erasmus who was vacillating, sometimes enthusing over Luther, sometimes denying all connection with him, was pressed to attack Luther's views about Free Will. His arguments were somewhat like this: the scripture is not as clear as Luther would have one believe. How can he argue that his interpretation is the best? In view of the difficulty in establishing the true meaning of the scripture concerning the problem of Free Will why not accept the traditional solution offered by Church? Why start such a fuss over something one cannot know with certainty? Hence it is easier to rest in a sceptical attitude and accept the age old wisdom of the Church in this matter.

Shakespeare might not have been unaware of this crucial debate about the criterion of truth and of Luther himself being afflicted by

* Hamlet's speech in Act. IV Sc. 3—'a convocation of politic worms, are e'en at him.....' is an allusion to the Diet of Worms.

doubt whether his call to reform the church was an inspiration, divine or diabolic ; Hamlet also expresses such fears about the ghost. But for his direct indebtedness to the sceptical point of view we need not go back earlier than Montaigne, who, it is said, had Empiricus' sceptical utterances inscribed on the roofs and rafters of his drawing room. Montaigne sums up the Pyrrhonian scepticism in his long sceptical essay, *Apology for Raymond Sebond* :

Ignorance that knows itself, that judges itself and condemns itself is not complete ignorance : to be that it must be ignorant of itself. So that the profession of the Pyrrhonians is to waver, doubt, and inquire, to be sure of nothing, to answer for nothing. Of the three functions of the soul, the imaginative, the appetitive and the consenting, they accept the first two ; the last they suspend and keep it ambiguous, without inclination or approbation, however slight, in one direction or the other.....

Their expressions are : 'I establish nothing ; it is no more thus than thus, or than neither way ; I do not understand it ; the appearances are equal on all sides ; it is equally legitimate to speak for and against. Nothing seems true, which may not seem false' Their sacramental word is $\epsilon\rho\chi\chi\omega$ (epekhō) that is to say, 'I hold back, I do not budge'.

Speaking of himself the greatest sceptic of the Renaissance, Montaigne, says :

The writings of the ancients, I mean the good writings, full and solid, tempt me and move me almost wherever they please ; the one I am listening to always seems to me the strongest. I find each one right in his turn, although they contradict each other.

Now, let us turn to the 'problem' plays of Shakespeare in which category *All's Well That Ends Well* is generally included ; although speaking of Montaigne's influence on Shakespeare this play is usually ignored possibly because of the fact that the hero Bertram, a cad, is far from being self-analytical as Hamlet, Angelo and Troilus are. Coming to Hamlet one confronts the baffling paradox about human nature :

What a piece of work is a man ! How noble in reason ! how infinite in faculties ! in form and moving how express and admirable ! in action how like an angel ! in apprehension how like a God ! the beauty of the World ! the paragon of animals ! And yet to me, what is this quintessence of dust ? Man delights not me—no, nor woman neither, though by your smiling you seem to say so.

It is usual for commentators to point out in the passage the impact

of the Machiavellian empiricism on the medieval concept of man being the paragon of animals. The dualism goes deeper than that and relates itself to the unresolved contradiction of the sceptics. The prince is conscious of man's baffling predicament between the angels and the beasts, between the glory of being made in God's image and the incrimination of being descended from the fallen Adam. This speech follows the prince's sudden detection of falsehood in his friends Rosencratz and Guildenstern, and ends with a joke at their expense. Although this was the immediate occasion, what torments him most is his mother's hasty re-marriage : 'Oh God ! a beast that wants discourse of reason would have mourn'd longer'. Was she not worse than a beast ? What was he himself ? 'I could accuse me of such things that it were better my mother had not borne me.—I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious ; with more offences at my back than I have thoughts to put them in, or imagination to give them shape, or time to act them in. What should fellows as I do crawling between earth and heaven ?'

Who will pluck out the heart of the mystery ? Are these questions to be asked ? Questions not to be answered. Is it sanity or insanity ? We just do not know. 'Hamlet himself would never have been aught to us or we to Hamlet', observed Robert Bridges⁶, 'were't not for the artful balance whereby Shakespeare so gingerly put his sanity in doubt without the while confounding his Reason'. Yes, the play is about the state of being in uncertainties and doubts ; about intimations from 'the undiscovered country', both without and within.

In *All's Well That Ends Well*, our next play, there is a pronounced ethical bias noticeable in Shakespeare's manipulation of the story he got from Boccaccio, in his ranging of the characters in two simple categories of good and bad men and also in the degrading of the hero and ennobling the heroine till there is a multiplicity of moral and social problems which perplex the reader. There is first of all 'the wretched insufficiency of the natural man emphasized at the heart of the play' by the two French lords, whom Tillyard rightly called the '*punctum indifferens*' of the play.

First Lord. Now, God delay our rebellion. As we are ourselves ; what things are we ?

Second Lord. Merely our traitors.

In fact every new trait added to the hero and the heroine degrades

the one and ennobles the other till in the end Shakespeare brings into focus not only the social question—which of course is no problem today—whether virtue or social status should have precedence ; but the far graver moral problem of ends and means. Is everything well that ends well ? Was the scapegrace rascally hero worth all the efforts the heroine made to win him ? Was it not undignified for the deserted Helena to adopt the loathsome 'bed trick', which makes the modern reader feel so scandalized about it ? Yes, the modern readers are entitled to feel as they like. Jaques was entitled to say that he did not like the name of Rosalind. And Orlando also was free to say 'there was no thought of pleasing you when she was christened'. After all every great poet—Homer, Dante, Sophocles, Shakespeare speak to all times only through the language, conventions and beliefs of their own age. So the mode apart, there is still an intellectual awareness of the duality between ends and means and the so-called emancipated spirit of the twentieth century has not quite solved it.

Passing on to a greater and much more complex play, *Measure for Measure* we feel that the play offers a 'final solution' that does not answer the questions raised. There is at the end a general amnesty granted to all sinners irrespective of the nature and gravity of the crimes, which savours of Christian salvation. Taking a cue from it and the scriptural images so common in the play, some of the modern commentators have busied themselves with religious interpretations of the play, and the fundamental problem of how justice is to be administered in a corrupt society has been shelved. They feel that if they could prove Shakespeare a good catholic philosopher their purpose would be served. One is reminded of an amusing situation in one of Strindberg's plays where the father of the girl Laura was in a strange predicament because his mother-in-law insisted that the girl should be brought up a spiritualist, the governess wanted to make her a Methodist, the servant girls a good salvationist, and Laura herself wanted to be an artist. Leaving these allegorists we have to encounter modern enlightenment in the manner of L. C. Knights who has wondered how an emancipated young man like Claudio should feel so remorseful as he does at having impregnated a girl whom he is prepared to marry. To him I have little more to say than what I have said before, that man's consciousness

of guilt, or sin, varies from age to age, and so do the laws. I cannot do better than quote Montaigne on this point.

There is nothing subject to more continual agitation than the laws. Since I was born I have seen those of our neighbour, the English change three or four times...what am I to make of a virtue that I saw in credit yesterday, that will be discredited tomorrow, and that becomes a crime on the otherside of the river.

II. 12. (*Apology*)

Now let us turn to the problem of the play which has a broader perspective than it is commonly supposed to have: it covers the entire administration of justice: the laws, the legislator, the judge and also the accused. There is first of all the fundamental problem which centres round the contrast between man's consciousness and man's instinct, the level of consciousness varying from the puritanic judge down to the brothel-keepers, who wonder why the laws which indicted sex vices should not make them lawful again when it is a mere question of change of edicts which may assure the livelihood of so many. And that no awareness of the law can guarantee immunity from crimes, nor punishment serve as a remedy, even an animal knows:

Pompey: If you head and hang all that offend that way but for ten years together, you'll be glad to give out a commission for more heads.

III. 1. 235.

That neither reason nor religious consciousness is a safeguard against human instincts the following speeches—one struggling to accept death and another violently rejecting it—would show:

Reason thus with life:

If I do lose thee, I do lose a thing

That none but fools would keep.

III. 1. 6.

* * *

Ay, but to die and go we know not where;

To lie in cold obstruction and to rot;

This sensible warm motion to become

A kneaded cold.....

The weariest and most loathed worldly life

That age, ache, penury and imprisonment

Can lay on nature is a paradise

To what we fear of death,

III. 1. 117.

Now the question is : how should laws be framed then ? Are the law-makers in possession of all the truths of human nature ? Do we not sometimes feel that the laws themselves should change to suit human nature ? If the administrators have an awareness of this and also of the human realities they will not 'make the service greater than the god'. Let us hear once again what Montaigne has to say here :

Now laws remain in credit not because they are just, but because they are laws. That is the mystic foundation of their authority ; they have no otherthey are often made by fools, more often by people, who in their hatred of equality, are wanting in equity ; but always by men, vain and irresolute authors. There is nothing so grossly and widely and ordinarily faulty as the laws.

III. 13. *Of Experience.*

Not only is there a scathing criticism of the laws and the law-maker ; even the administrators who are in charge of implementing them are not spared :

Consider the form of justice that governs us : it is a true testimony of human imbecility, so full of contradiction and error.....poor devils are sacrificed to the form of justice. How many condemnations I have seen which were more criminal than the crime.

Hazlitt once remarked : 'Shakespeare was in one sense the least moral of all writers : for morality is made of antipathies and his talent consisted of sympathy with human nature in all its shapes, degrees, depression and elevation'. It is indeed his profound sympathy with human nature that prompts Shakespeare to go to the heart of the matter which he presents in the form of a paradox :

.....there is so great a fever on goodness that the dissolution of it must cure it.....There is scarce truth enough alive to make societies secure ; but security enough to make fellowships accurst. Much upon this riddle runs the wisdom of the world.

III. 2. 197.

This is the most serious exploration of the problem of justice and this extra-contextual passage sounds like what T. S. Eliot called the 'third voice'. Laws made without sufficient knowledge of human nature and enforced in ignorant self-confidence defeat their purpose ; far from making society secure, it embitters human relationship in society. The legislator, who makes laws, does not know human nature, nor does the magistrate or the judge who enforces them

know even his own nature—life being what it is, a riddle where virtue itself may breed corruption and man has ever to make a new discovery of himself, every new experience being a challenge to him.

How would you solve the dilemma which does not relate to one society or the other but to all human societies where civilization is 'ripe unto rottenness'? Yet F. R. Leavis^r argues that there is no 'unresolved contradiction' here but only 'complexity'. That laws must be there to protect society from anarchy nobody denies; it is the realistic analysis of what laws actually are and in what muddled ways they are administered that causes heart-searching. Dr. Leavis oversimplifies the issue; this is how a Shakespearian masterpiece gets blunted.

We now turn to the last of the 'problem plays', *Troilus and Cressida*, which, to my mind, is even more consonant with the spirit of Montaigne than any other, reflecting as it does the development one notices in the French essayist. Failing in his search for the absolute which is unknowable Montaigne turned to the examination of himself because he believed in all sincerity that he could know nothing but himself. It is the individual's judgement, call it intuition if you like, that is the measure of the value of a thing which varies not only from one individual to another but also in the same individual at different times. So, the sceptic of the *Apology* turned an individualist in his later essays. It will be noticed that there is a corresponding progression in the ideas of the play. It is significant that Troilus, the rank individualist in the play, is pitted against the traditionalist like Hector and it is his point of view, viz., that truth is something relative, that ultimately holds sway. Although Hector seems to be unconvinced he goes to the war all the same and is killed. Corresponding to it on the materialistic plane there is the new concept of market-value, ever fluctuating, which becomes predominant in the pattern of imagery in the play. But let us first present the problems of the play: above all there is the question of the reality of love. Troilus idolizes Cressida whom everybody else knows to be a wanton, and even when finally disillusioned about her he still clings to his ideal passion.

Let it not be believed for womanhood !

Think, we had mothers : do not give advantage

To stubborn critics, apt without a theme

For depravation, to square the general sex
By Cressid's rule.

V. 2. 127.

One wonders if human emotion has not a value of its own apart from the object associated with it. In other words, the question arises : is value subjective or objective ? It is the problem of value which resolves itself in the play into many subordinate branches. Is Helen worth the tremendous sacrifices she has called forth from both the sides ? Yet another aspect of the problem of value is suggested in the course of debate in the Trojan Camp on the question of the retention of Helen. When Troilus points out that the worth of a thing depends on the way it is subjectively valued—'what's aught but as 'tis valued', Hector draws our attention to the other side of the question saying that 'value dwells not in particular will' : Thus the debate seems inconclusive.

Although Montaigne's longest essay, *Apology*, which contains the motto—*Que sçay-je* (what do I know ?) was hitherto considered to be the centre of his thought, it is no more thought to be his last word. He came to realize that 'flux cannot know flux' ; it is not only that the enquirer changes every moment but also the object of enquiry. So the impression of the moment is the only important thing. Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* may thus be regarded as embodying the spirit of quest for truth and Troilus himself the prime agent of its final discovery.

Before meeting Cressida, Troilus seems to entertain doubts about the legitimacy of the war, the doubt which Hector expressed later in his debate in the Trojan Camp.

Troilus : Peace, you ungracious clamours ! peace, rude sounds !
Fools on both sides ! Helen must needs be fair
When with your blood you daily paint her thus.
I cannot fight upon this argument :
It is too starved a subject for my sword.

I. 1. 185.

By and by he comes to feel that the value of an object is subjectively determined by the valuer, and this realization comes to him with the dawning of his love for Cressida. In his discussion with her he solemnly asserts that a lover's worth is 'no perfection in reversion' i.e., it is the present worth of the lover—not what he had been in the

past or might be in future, that determines the issue. This puts one in mind of the fluctuating market value so much emphasized in the play. And it is this aspect of the matter that Ulysses' homily on Time being a great-sized monster of ingratitude focuses. The implication is that there is an inevitable erosion of man's worth unless replenished by present performance. True it is that the opinion of others is the measure of his worth. But that this opinion may also be shrewdly manipulated is proved by Ulysses in the cases of Achilles and Ajax who are respectively undervalued and overestimated according to the schemer's policy. Over against this politic debasement of value as such and its total negation by Thersites' cynicism—'Nothing but lechery. All incontinent varlets', we have Troilus' perception of truth as a kind of intuition which dawns upon him in his passion for Cressida. He calls himself 'a strange soul upon the Stygian bank'. Mark the death-transcending spiritual experience implied in the image. He realizes that love is not capable of fulfilment by a single lover, nor can a single woman realize the ideal expected of her. Nonetheless the lover sees his soul reflected in the woman he loves and acquires self-knowledge. So, after his shocked discovery of Cressida's treachery he goes to the fight an emancipated young man who refuses to discredit love itself just because a single woman has proved unworthy of his faith.

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THE DUAL VISION IN *HAMLET*

GOURI PRASAD GHOSH

[This is the author's second work bearing the general title *The Insubstantial Pageant*, the first being *The Mystery of Prospero's Vision* brought out by Orient Longman Ltd in 1970. The earlier work poses vital questions on the entire process of Shakespeare's philosophical development which it will be the business of the remaining parts of the serial to answer. The present study of *Hamlet* provides the first link in the chain of observations which seeks to present a new interpretation of the Shakespearean evolution.]

I. STARTING FROM THE MIDDLE

IN the study of an evolutionary process it is sometimes difficult to know where to start unless one starts at the beginning. This was the problem I faced when I came to realize that what I was trying to do was nothing more or less than one more study of Shakespeare's mind in the light of one more novel idea. My earlier purpose had been relatively simple: to bring out the uniqueness of Prospero's speech on the "insubstantial pageant", as I had tried to do in *The Mystery of Prospero's Vision*, and to pose a question that might or might not evoke critical curiosity. But the puzzle kept haunting me, and I could not help trying on my own to find an answer. I re-explored the last plays, thinking that it might be possible to trace the origins and the gradual concentration of the elements of Prospero's strange vision there. But soon wider explorations convinced me, rightly or wrongly, that the attitude of mind finally emerging in the vision of the "insubstantial pageant" had its roots much deeper in the past, that it was actually a development of something that had always been there in some form or other in Shakespeare's mind and could be traced back, however faintly, to his early writing days.

Still the question of starting point arises, because the thread of evolution I appear to have traced is so streaky in the early stages that it would be likely to escape notice altogether unless one was specially looking for some such thing. Doubtless, the beginnings of

this peculiar response to life, the first stray footmarks of an obscure psychic process, are important, and we shall have to consider them in due course to show how the possibility of the end lay in the beginning. But for the present I would prefer to start unfolding the process not at the beginning, but at a *significant middle point* where the tendencies—of which I intend to show the final culmination in Prospero's insubstantial world—first appear to make their presence felt in mature Shakespearean drama.

II. GROWTH OF THE "ABSOLUTE DRAMATIC VISION"

It is necessary to start with a recapitulation of certain critical commonplaces and certain trends in modern Shakespeare criticism to show the relation in which my ideas stand to them. There has been general agreement in thinking that what may roughly be called the middle part of Shakespeare's writing career—as distinguished from the early and the final periods—covers the phases of his highest success in dramatic creation. This great central period, which perhaps begins somewhere around 1596 with the composition of plays like *Richard II* and *The Merchant of Venice*, brings before us the picture of not only a strangely gifted but also of a strangely *developing* mind, already remarkably mature and moving steadily on until it reaches the peak of power and perfection around the year 1605 with the creation of marvels like *Othello*, *Lear* and *Macbeth*. As this mature creativity gets under way, the dominance of the lyricist over the dramatist, of the adapter over the creator, of the romantic over the realist, of the vaguely typical over the distinctly individual, slowly comes to an end. Slowly but surely, psychological truth, as Shakespeare could draw it from the fast-changing social life around him, gains ascendancy over relatively vague and fanciful ideas of character. In the portrayal of the external world correspondingly, what may be called the law of probability, the general drift of things in the world of his experience, comes to replace somewhat mechanically woven chains of events. A continually deepening sense of reality concerning both the external and the psychological worlds comes to be the keynote of this acute dramatic vision. All the formal devices employed, including the great vehicle of poetry, become instrumental to the vital purpose of communicating this vision. And one of the most striking features of this mature Shakespearean

drama is its absolutely vivid individualization of every character and every situation presented—which according to Theodore Watts-Dunton's once-famous dictum¹ is the hallmark of what he calls the "absolute dramatic vision" and is to be found only in the works of a few rare spirits like Homer, Sophocles and Shakespeare. It has been remarked earlier in this work that Elizabethan drama, the drama of a world of rising individualism, is by its very nature a study of the living variety of life, of particulars variously grouped and bound up with each other, and that every character and every situation in it, though certainly suggesting some general type or other and occasionally having a kind of symbolic aura around it, is unique in itself and has its own inalienable shade of reality. The living variety of the world, inner and outer, spreads itself out in various significant combinations before the great dramatist's eye. He can distinguish so many of its teeming shapes and knows that the constitution and behaviour of every one of them, though conforming to a general pattern, is distinct and unique. This great individualizing vision of character and circumstance, this intensely realistic impression of countless unique pieces involved in the complex dance of life, marks the peak of the mature dramatic vision of Shakespeare.

This supposedly absolute dramatic vision is to be found in different degrees in all the plays of the great Shakespearean central period: in the three great historical plays and in all the mature comedies including those in which the dramatist is deliberately fanciful and capricious. But the peak of this vision is to be found in the great tragedies written roughly between 1600 and 1607. Of course, in conformity with the general social atmosphere and the general dramatic practice, it is the tragic aspects of life that engage the poet's central attention in this phase. Doubtless he is deeply conscious of, nearly obsessed with, what appears to be the inscrutable and inherent presence of evil in the world he sees around him. He is aware of its many lurking and menacing shades and of its power to overwhelm, at least temporarily, all forces of goodness and sanity, extending its terrible sway even over great and universally admired characters. But in spite of this dominantly tragic vision of life and character, the vision is presented in every one of the great tragedies in a wholesomely balanced form. We find that, though these plays are in a way studies of evil, the element of evil in them

does not emerge in stiff unlikelike symbols or in mechanically contrived characters. Macbeth develops into an awful criminal indeed, but he never becomes guilty ambition or murderous ambition altogether. In spite of the gradually increasing dominance of evil in him, he remains an intensely real individual compounded of many essences as individuals in real life are. Again, the evil does not appear in a sinister central patch, but is shown to be of various qualities even in a single play. *Othello* is the tragedy in which evil is most centralized. But even Iago is not the one evil focus in *Othello*. The potential of rashness and jealousy in the Moor himself, the stupidity, lust and gullibility of Roderigo and the weakness and suggestibility of Cassio constitute a rich vision of various positive and negative shades of evil, each presented in a perfectly lifelike mould and in flawless interaction with others. Secondly, the consciousness of evil in the tragedies, though deep and pervasive, does not eclipse or distort the vision of good. Not only is goodness looked upon by implication as the very basis of social life which is repeatedly shattered by the impact of evil and is sought to be put together once more after the vicious wave has passed : not only are there plenty of good characters in each of the tragedies, but there are characters of various shades of goodness as well, each presented in significant and vividly real combinations with others. Thirdly, not only is the impression of an ordered process of causation not weakened by the tragic bias : the impression, perhaps the illusion, of causation, of a chain of events set in motion chiefly by the forces of character and each following its forerunner in an inexorable logical sequence, is stronger than ever before. The Shakespearean tragic world is unquestionably evil-ridden, but it is not a confused or tottering world like Webster's. The specific vision of evil certainly clouds, but does not obliterate the wider general vision of life. The tragic happenings are presented against a sustained consciousness of the great totality of life. And in this tragedy-dominated world of Shakespeare everything stands in deeply meaningful relation to everything else : consistency of both vision and art rises to the highest pitch. In various measures and, of course, with individual differences, the four great tragedies of *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear* and *Macbeth* may be said to represent the summit of this ordered realism of Shakespeare.

III. THE STEADY LIGHT STARTS FLUCTUATING

It will perhaps be accepted without much dispute that two of the foremost qualities common to the plays of the great central period are *balance* and *objectivity* of vision and consequently of expression. Shakespeare obviously deals with different combinations of elements in comedies, histories and tragedies. But almost everywhere he brings the different life-elements together in the right proportions and creates out of each balanced mixing of things a harmonious pattern that delights and satisfies. No serious overbalance of personal emotion interferes with this exquisite weaving of highly objective visionary patterns (though, of course, in art the term 'objective' must always be taken in a relative sense). The type of vision changes as the central attention of the poet's mind shifts along from one dominant aspect of life to another or to idylls and fantasies based on life, as it does in *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*. It may shift from the portrait of an ideally balanced feudal ruler and man of the world to the contemplation of a jealousy-maddened noble soul who is something of a simple-hearted alien in the complex and commercialized society of Renaissance Venice. But the harmonious objectivity of the portrayal remains more or less the same.

This, of course, is a general picture, and it is only true in a general way of the plays of the great central part of Shakespeare's dramatic career. *It is not wholly true*. Till about the year 1600, by which time Shakespeare had written the first mature tragedy of *Julius Cæsar* and probably followed it up with his last two idyllic comedies, the harmony of a fundamentally balanced mind appears to have been fully reflected in Shakespearean drama without any perceptible blots. There is nothing discordant, hardly more than a trace of intrusive subjectivity, in *Julius Cæsar*. There is nothing much either that might be said to disturb dramatic harmony in *As You Like It* or in *Twelfth Night*, though the thinning away of life-substance in these last comedies might well indicate Shakespeare's inability to interpret life any more in terms of the "comic vision". But from this point onward, from about the year 1600, when Shakespeare steps forth inexorably into the world of tragedy, the level of dramatic objectivity is no longer uniform. It waxes and wanes, ebbs and flows, in a mysterious manner, rising on occasions to heights never reached before, but at times falling into no less great confusion. Not that

the steady objectivity of the vision becomes unsteady all at once after 1600. On the contrary, it is a slow, insidious process with strange bifurcations, zigzags and loops. What I wish to show in the present chapter is that the disturbing process, the rise of a major conflict of feelings, becomes clearly perceptible for the first time in the tragedy of *Hamlet*, after which it follows an extremely complex course through the so-called tragi-comic Problem Plays and the other great and not-so-great tragedies until its final effects make themselves felt in the totally new attitude reflected in the last plays.

IV. BASIC INCONGRUITIES IN *Hamlet*

Some exceedingly complex experience, deep and wide in its implication, must have haunted Shakespeare's mind when, setting out to write *Hamlet*, he found himself on the brink of an enigma which he found impossible to bypass and yet painfully difficult to accommodate in his creative visions; and which was to lead him in the coming years into tortuous ways of thought and feeling calling for profoundly complex modes of communication. Or perhaps it would be more correct to say that this complex psychic process, doubtless a mingled product of social and personal experience, was suddenly accelerated at this point, introducing a qualitative change in his whole vision. The result is the appearance of a strange distemper of the soul which leaves unmistakable stains on the plays written immediately after 1600 and introduces an awkward nonconforming element in the many-toned harmony of Shakespearean drama. This disharmony, as we shall see, is caused by the emergence of a curious duality of vision which brings about a slow but decisive change in Shakespeare's entire response to life. The new disintegrating element which creates this strained duality of vision emerges clearly for the first time in the tragedy of *Hamlet*, the first play to bear the mark of that great inner discomposure which was to have such far-reaching consequences.

The interpretation I am going to offer of the state of the dramatist's mind as reflected in the play is in the ultimate analysis based on the views of scholars who think, as Waldo put it,² that "nothing is to be gained by compelling system from what is not system" and who feel obliged to attribute a great deal of these incongruities to some subjective feeling groping for expression in the dramatist's mind. I have spoken disparagingly of T. S. Eliot's snobbish assertion that

Hamlet is "most certainly an artistic failure".³ But I believe Eliot's profound probing of the *Hamlet* puzzle, based in its turn on J. M. Robertson's pioneering work,⁴ to have revealed the general essence of the situation. My one important point of difference with Eliot is that while he puts the entire emphasis on the intimately personal nature of the experience which, he thinks, "exceeded the facts", it is my idea that the experience assumed its overwhelming character because of the facts, whatever they might have been, and because Shakespeare with his extraordinary depth and breadth of vision could not help reading its painful significance in the general social scene, *resulting in Hamlet's feeling of being trapped in an evil world*. Nevertheless, Eliot's commentary brings out so well this strange distemper in Shakespeare's inner world that I should like to present it here in his own words before passing on to my specific observations:

The 'madness' of Hamlet lay to Shakespeare's hand; in the earlier play a simple ruse, and to that end, we may presume, understood as a ruse by the audience. For Shakespeare it is less than madness and more than feigned. The levity of Hamlet, his repetition of phrase, his puns, are not part of a deliberate plan of dissimulation, but a form of emotional relief. In the character of Hamlet it is the buffoonery of an emotion which can find no outlet in action; in the dramatist it is the buffoonery of an emotion which he cannot express in art. The intense feeling, ecstatic or terrible, without an object or exceeding its object, is something which every person of sensibility has known; it is doubtless a study to pathologists. It often occurs in adolescence; the ordinary person puts these feelings to sleep, or trims down his feelings to fit the business world; the artist keeps it alive by his ability to intensify the world to his emotions. The Hamlet of Laforgue is an adolescent; the Hamlet of Shakespeare is not; he has not that explanation and excuse. We must simply admit that here Shakespeare tackled a problem which proved too much for him. Why he attempted it at all is an insoluble puzzle; under compulsion of what experience he attempted to express the inexpressibly horrible, we cannot ever know. We need a great many facts in his biography; and we should like to know whether, and when, and after or at the same time as what personal experience, he read Montaigne, II. xii., *Apologie de Raymond Sebond*. We should have, finally, to know something which is by hypothesis unknowable, for we assume it to be an experience which, in the manner indicated, exceeded the facts. We should have to understand things which Shakespeare did not understand himself.

Yes, we do not know the exact nature of the personal experience which must have contributed to the creation of such

feelings in Hamlet. But with the social history of the whole age and all the works of Shakespeare in our hands there is no reason why we should not be able to understand the *significance* of Hamlet's attitude and his changing moods in relation to the entire process of the development of Shakespeare's mind. In fact, the only way to understand a thing rightly is to look at it as a phase in the development of a process and in its interrelations with the things with which it is connected, and this is particularly true in the present case. Secondly, puzzles like the present one can only be solved by means of an objective approach based on a study of concrete facts, an approach from which all desire to impose preconceived ideas on the subject is carefully excluded. Thirdly, it has to be realized that all individual consciousness is actually an individualized form of social consciousness, and that the roots of the visions of great authors are to be sought not only in the narrower world of their personal experience but also in their interaction with the larger social environment which variously conditions these experiences. Let us now see where a concrete objective study of the text of *Hamlet* takes us.

V. THE NATURE OF HAMLET'S MALADY

One of the central features of this deep inner malaise, as so many critics have pointed out, is an oppressive sense of evil in the human world. To be precise, this great and unaccountable concentration of evil is to be found chiefly (i) in the human disposition, generally speaking, and (ii) in woman. Notwithstanding passing shades of fatalism, this smothering excess of evil is imputed to man, is attributed to human character, resulting in an unquenchable bitterness and, finally, in a breeding sense of the futility of living and of the sad mutability and mortality of human existence.

The mysterious cynical despair in Hamlet's soul "which passeth show" and which Claudius comments on as

something in his soul

O'er which his melancholy sits on brood (III. i)

and as

This something-settled matter in his heart (III. i)

and which has no real precursor in Saxo Grammaticus or in Belle-

forest or presumably even in the *Ur-Hamlet*, finds expression in a number of witheringly pessimistic and misogynic comments, at times touched with an acid cynicism. All of these, I believe, every reader invariably feels, are strangely in excess of the demands of the dramatic situation. They point a steady finger at the impact of a subjective element on the objective world of drama. Let us not try to explain away this dark shadow of subjectivity by saying, as has been said by Cunliffe⁶ and others, that Shakespeare was in his own characteristic way following the Elizabethan practice of imitating Senecan morbidity and gloom. Doubtless, Senecan influence on later Elizabethan writers was a reality and must have been caused by inner historical affinities. At the same time, let us not forget that Coleridge has called Shakespeare "myriad-minded", an epithet which would be quite out of place in the cases of both Seneca and Thomas Kyd, his most celebrated English imitator. Consequently, a dynamic and many-sided mind like Shakespeare's could not be saturated with Senecan influence as Kyd's far narrower and one-sided mind could. We must also take note of the plain fact that, unlike Kyd and his spiritual successors, Shakespeare was no chronically gloomy Senecan, that he had written some of sunniest stuff written in that or any other age, and that the two plays he had composed immediately before this "Senecan imitation" of *Hamlet* were *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*. Senecan influence might very well be there along with so many other things. But it can never explain that sudden change of tone that appeared in Shakespearean drama at this point or that profound unrest in Hamlet's soul which tosses him up and down on unceasing waves of agony. Let us go straight to the heart of the matter; let us take some of the comments of Hamlet bearing the marks of this agony in their chronological order and consider the nature of the total impression they produce on us :

O God ! O God !

How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable

Seems to be all the uses of this world.

Fie on't ! O fie ! 'tis an unweeded garden

That grows to seed ; things rank and gross in nature

Possess it merely. (I. ii)

and yet, within a month

Let me not think on't : Frailty, thy name is woman ! (I. ii)

O God ! a beast that wants discourse of reason,
Would have mourned longer (I. ii)

O ! most wicked speed, to-post
With such dexterity to incestuous sheets. (I. ii)

Thrift, thrift, Horatio ! the funeral bak'd meats
Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables (I. ii)

My tables, —meet it is I set it down,
That one may smile and smile, and be a villain. (I. V)

Ay, sir, to be honest, as this world goes, is to be one man picked out of
ten thousand. (II. ii)

I have of late,—but wherefore I know not,—lost my mirth, foregone
all custom of exercises ; and indeed it goes so heavily with my disposition
that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory ; this
most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament,
this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, why it appears no other thing to
me but a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. What a piece of work
is man ! How noble in reason ! How infinite in faculty ! in form, im-
moving, how express and admirable ! in action how like an angel ! in
apprehension how like a god ! the beauty of the world ! the paragon of
animals ! And yet to me, what is this quintessence of dust ? (II. ii)

Get thee to a nunnery : Why would'st thou be a breeder of sinners ?
... What should such fellows as I do crawling between heaven and earth ?
We are arrant knaves ; all ; believe none of us. Go thy ways to a nunnery.
(III. i)

...be thou chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape
calumny. Get thee to a nunnery, go ! farewell. Or if thou wilt needs
marry, marry a fool ; for wise men know well enough what monsters you
make of them. (III. i)

Tis easy as lying (III. i)

Such an act
That blurs the grace and blush of modesty ;
Calls virtue hypocrite ; takes off the rose
From the fair forehead of an innocent love
And sets a blister there ; makes marriage vows
As false as dicers' oaths ; O ! such a deed
As from the body of contraction plucks
The very soul, and sweet religion makes
A rhapsody of words. (III. iv)

Forgive me this my virtue ;
For in the fatness of these pury times
Virtue itself of vice must pardon beg,
Yea, curb and woe for leave to do him good. (III. iv)

If thou didst ever held me in thy heart,
 Absent thee from felicity awhile,
 And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain
 To tell my story (v. ii)

VI. HOW COULD HAMLET'S MALADY INFECT SO MANY PEOPLE ?

Let us now take note of an interesting fact. The feelings expressed in the above passages are entirely and exclusively Hamlet's. They could not belong to anyone else, obviously because none else, not even Horatio, had feelings like these. But we observe that utterances embodying feelings similar to Hamlet's occasionally emerge from other characters too. Laertes does not even remotely resemble Hamlet in his mental disposition. Yet, while unnecessarily admonishing Ophelia about her chastity, he speaks words closely resembling some of Hamlet's

The charest maid is prodigal enough
 If she unmask her beauty to the moon ;
 Virtue herself 'scapes not calumnious strokes ;
 The canker galls the infants of the spring
 Too oft before their buttons be disclos'd,
 And in the morn and liquid dew of youth
 Contagious blastments are most imminent. (I. iii)

And the senile and servile courtier, the busy-body Polonius, while tutoring Ophelia about her forthcoming meeting with Hamlet, goes very far out of his way in making comments on man's hypocritical ways which might very well have come from Hamlet himself :

'Tis too much proved that with devotion's visage
 And pious action we do sugar o'er
 The devil himself.

Neither Laertes nor Polonius has experiences or feelings like Hamlet's, and yet they are at times found saying things that bear the stamp of feelings *almost identical with those that keep haunting Hamlet*. If we go into greater detail, we should be still more struck with the similarity of the implications of some of Hamlet's speeches with some of the casual utterances of certain other characters who have nothing in common with Hamlet. What Laertes tells Ophelia in the parting scene :

Virtue herself 'scapes not calumnious strokes

is hardly different from what Hamlet says to her later :

be thou chaste as ice, pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny.

Again, Hamlet's feeling regarding the "frailty" of woman is almost echoed in Laertes' quite unwarranted fear that his sister might her "chaste treasures open" to Hamlet's "unmastered importunity". And again, Laertes' unreasonable fears about Ophelia are echoed in Ophelia's fears about Laertes when she warns him against treading "the primrose path of dalliance"

Like a puffed and reckless libertine. (I. iii)

A general suspicion of sexual depravity haunts Polonius as well when, without any specific reason, he suspects Laertes of practising "drabbing" in Paris and when he tells Ophelia that Hamlet's professions of love to her made, as Ophelia puts it, "with almost all the holy vows of heaven", are

But mere implorators of unholy suits,
Breathing like sanctified and pious bawds,
The better to beguile. (I. iii)

How could the senile father and the youthful son whose experiences, and therefore, whose responses to life, must have been widely different, speak in the same strain of lust masquerading as love, and how could their words resemble in this respect, as they clearly do, the words of Hamlet, a person so utterly different by nature and placed in such entirely different circumstances? *But that is just what happens.* Feelings that are peculiar to Hamlet and could belong to no one else in the play do occasionally in a most unwarrantable manner seep out through the speeches of some other characters who are totally unlike him. So ubiquitous are these feelings that they brook no artistic bounds and ooze forth even through the songs of the insane Ophelia. This odd co-existence of incompatibles; this similarity of thought emerging from totally different minds and the obstinate recurrence of these thoughts can suggest only two things : (i) that these reflections were neither Hamlet's nor Polonius's nor Laertes' nor Ophelia's ; they were Shakespeare's ; and (ii) that these subjective feelings were of such an intensity and of such baffling complexity that they could not be crystallized into any objective dramatic moulds. They overrun the entire play, peeping in at all sorts of likely and unlikely places on

the faintest possible excuse. They show the curiously irrepressible nature of the subjectivity permeating the play.

VII. A FATAL TILT IN THE BALANCE

The total impression formed by all these utterances is made up of a revolting sense of human baseness, of vile ambition, avarice, lust, cruelty, faithlessness. And the central focus of this gnawing sense of evil is woman's loathsome frailty. The oppressiveness of this evil is no doubt intensified by Shakespeare's failure to find a proper "objective correlative" for it, as Eliot puts it; but intrinsically it appears to be caused by two feelings: (i) that this evil is unacceptable to Hamlet's noble mind, and yet is so undeniably real and (ii) that this many-faced evil is inherent in the human, and especially in the feminine, disposition; and that there is no way of shifting the responsibility for man's evil thoughts and actions on to any other agency. There is no explaining from Hamlet's point of view, or rather from the point of view of the Shakespeare of the *Hamlet* phase, how Claudius could commit the crime of coolly murdering his royal brother by pouring poison into his ear while he lay asleep in his garden, and do the other ugly things he did, except that he, a human being, was wicked by nature. There is no explaining how Gertrude in her late middle age and having a universally admired grown-up son and a Hyperion-like royal husband on whom she would hang

As if increase of appetite had grown
By what it fed on

could be so basely infatuated with her husband's satyr-like brother as to stoop to that unnaturally shameless act of marrying him within a month of her noble husband's sudden death, except that her nature was vile and "Frailty, thy name is woman":

Two factors could conceivably have lightened Hamlet's cynical despair; but they failed to do so. Ophelia's sweet, yielding passivity and innocence could have at least partially countered Gertrude's abominableness; but it was powerless to do so. Hamlet knows Ophelia to be good; his penetrating mind cannot have failed to guess the hand of compulsion behind her timid rejection of his advances. That it would be wrong to assume as Dover Wilson does⁶ that "Ophelia blackens her own character in her lover's eyes", that

actually Hamlet's view of her helpless innocence has not changed, is conclusively proved among other things by those hushed words of tenderness he so spontaneously utters at the end of his famous soliloquy, on suddenly discovering her presence :

Soft you now !

The fair Ophelia ! Nymph, in thy orisons

Be all my sins remembered.

And yet, against his reason, he cannot help thinking of her, another "seeming-virtuous" woman, as tainted actually or potentially with his mother's vices which have come to assume for him a painfully universal significance. As against the treachery and greed represented by Claudius, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, there was the unwavering friendship, the unalloyed goodness, of Horatio. These could, rationally speaking, have gone some way in righting the balance. *But the balance had a fatal tilt which no amount of rationality in the world could at that moment have righted*; because Hamlet was looking at these things from an immovable point of gloom—immovable at least till the end of the fourth act.

VIII. NO FATE ISSUING IN ACTION

The second factor capable of relieving the intense gloom of Hamlet's cynical and misogynic despair could have been a sense of a mysterious Providence guiding human affairs. A great deal of man's responsibility, especially for his evil doings could be transferred to such an agency. But Hamlet does not find relief that way either. For he does not feel, not at least till his return from the sea, that Fate or any such agency is responsible for human evils. It is true, there are a few passing references to Fate and her strange ordinances in different parts of the play. The First Player cries out in the rehearsal scene, "Out, out, thou strumpet Fortune," and talks of pronouncing treason against Fortune's state. The Player King comments in course of his address to the Player Queen on the mutability of human fortunes :

Our wills and fates do so contrary run

That our devices still are overthrown ;

Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own (III. ii)

Hamlet too, while commenting on the drinking habits of the Danish people, goes somewhat out of his way to attribute the

presence of vice in otherwise noble characters to the working of chance :

So oft it chances in particular men,
That for some vicious mole of nature in them,
As in their birth—wherein they are not guilty,
Since nature cannot chose his origin — (I. iv)

and makes yet another fatalistic comment while telling Horatio about how he foiled Claudius's plot for sending him to his death in England :

Our indiscretion sometimes serves us well
When our deep plots do pall ; and that should teach us
There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will. (V. ii)

But what we should take careful note of is that these fatalistic ideas and principles *do not issue in action* in the tragedy of *Hamlet* ; nor do they determine its central tone. The only kind of fate that plays some sort of a part in the action of *Hamlet* is blind chance causing happenings like Hamlet's being carried off alone on the pirate ship and the fatal exchange of rapiers. These have no influence whatever on the tortured pessimism of the play or on the actions of the characters. At least till the end of the fourth act, fatalism is no more than a passing shadow in *Hamlet*, or at best a feeble undercurrent. What darkens Hamlet's life and poisons his thought is not "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune", but human baseness. The responsibility for human actions, for all the terrible ills they involve, is laid almost squarely on character, on human nature. And that is an intolerable thought which breaks in on the harmonious objectivity of Shakespearean drama at this point and starts transforming its thought-patterns.

Another of the feelings attending on this mysteriously oppressive sense of evil is a weariness of living, a haunting sense of life's futility. Life had a meaning, a value, for Hamlet which it no longer has. We do not know the specific cause of the change. What we feel from the play is that the change in life's aspect was great enough for Hamlet to have lost much of his interest in living. Not only does he say things like

O ! that this too too solid flesh would melt,
 Thaw and resolve itself into a dew ;
 Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd
 His canon 'gainst self-slaughter ! (I. ii)

and

I do not set my life at a pin's fee (I. iv)

But even the thoughts in the "To be or not to be" speech brings up questions on life and death and a depth of pessimism too great for the dramatic context. They are in a large measure the lyrical outcry of a soul on which certain experiences of life, which envelop it on all sides and of which we find only blurred shadows in the play, have imposed an intolerable burden of agony.

IX. A SINGLE INTEGRAL PERSONALITY ?

Before I finish with this point it might be useful to discuss here certain well-known critical views on this oppressive cynical despair in Hamlet which appears to smother his action. Bradley explains this sickening disillusionment as the natural reaction of a youth, possessed of an extra-fine sensibility, to his mother's revoltingly hasty marriage and to the even more outrageous revelation that his father had been murdered by his uncle, the very man his mother married in such unseemly hurry.⁷ This is certainly conceivable, *but the text does not appear to justify such an assumption.* Whatever his exact age (which by the grave-digger's computation is thirty), Hamlet undoubtedly is a young man, and some of the things he says certainly reflect a deep idealistic sensibility. *But that is not the whole of him.* There is an occasional strain in him which accords neither with youth nor with an idealistic sensibility. There are plenty of times when Hamlet speaks not like a youth whose moral and idealistic feelings have been freshly injured but like a much-experienced and progressively disillusioned man of the world who has seen enough of life and of women to be able to sum it all up. Let us think of his words to Polonius :

Let her not walk in the sun : conception is a blessing ; but not as your daughter may conceive.

the seasoned indelicacies he exchanges with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern ; the strange obscenities he speaks to Ophelia in the Play Scene ; the words he has said to her earlier on, particularly,

I have heard of your paintings too, well enough ; God has given you one face, and you make yourselves another : you jig, you amble, and you lisp, and nickname God's creatures, and make your wantonness your ignorance.

and the words with which he warns his mother not to

Let the bloat king tempt you again to bed ;
Pinch wanton on your cheek ; call you his mouse ;
And let him, for a pair of reechy kisses,
Or paddling in your neck with his damn'd fingers,
Make you ravel all this matter out,
That I am essentially not in madness,
But mad in craft.

Could the mind of an idealistically disposed youth equipped with a delicate moral sensibility be disillusioned enough almost overnight to be able to say things like these ? Could an intensely idealistic youth, possessed, as Bradley thought, of "the soul of the youthful poet as Shelley and Tennyson have described it," get so transformed, under whatever stroke of disillusionment, within two or three months, as to ask Rosencrantz and Guildenstern if they were living "in the middle parts of Fortune" or to tell the flower-like Ophelia :

That's a fair thought to lie between maids' legs

and

It would cost you a groaning to take off my edge ?

It is psychologically absurd. Hamlet does indeed behave at times like a delicate-minded youth whose sensibilities are wilting under a rude shock ; but we have seen indisputable evidence that he can at other times speak like a seasoned cynic and misogynist.

Then again, even apart from the question of moral sensibility, Hamlet at times utters words of wisdom which could not but be the product of profound and mature experience. He *is* a youth whose sensibilities have been shocked at the first monstrous exhibition of sin and crime they have come across, and yet he *does* at times say things which are expressive of wide experience of the world and the deepest and maturest wisdom and which could by no stretch of imagination be associated with inexperienced youth. Let us think how in his famous speech he recounts in those immortal words the miseries that make life unbearable :

The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
 That flesh is heir to.....
the whips and scorns of time,
 The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
 The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
 The insolence of office, and the spurns
 That the patient merit of the unworthy takes...

No experiences could be more removed from the life of a young prince brought up at court and in the rarefied atmosphere of a university than this great social vision of the sufferings of the chronically oppressed common man. Grunting and sweating under a weary life, the lot of the wretched of the earth, could by no means be imagined as coming within the orbit of the young prince's experience. And yet these feelings emerge from Hamlet's lips charged with the vibration of real experience. Let us think of the words of cynical wisdom he speaks to Polonius and Ophelia and of the profundities he utters in a deliberately crazy manner before the King over the body of Polonius. Let us think of his sudden digression in Act I Scene iv on the "fatal flaw" lurking in certain human natures :

So oft it chances in particular men,
 That for some vicious mole of nature in them,
 As, in their birth—wherein they are not guilty,
 Since nature cannot choose his origin,—
 By the o'ergrowth of some complexion,
 Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason,
 Or by some habit that too much o'erleavens
 The form of plausible manners ; that these men,
 Carrying, as I say, the stamp of one defect,
 Being nature's livery, or fortune's star,
 Their virtues else, be they as pure as grace,
 As infinite as men may undergo,
 Shall in the general censure take corruption
 From that particular fault.

This is not an academic dissertation. This is a profound vision of life born of the deepest experience, a vision typical of Shakespeare at this stage, foreshadowing the unborn destinies of Othello and Lear and Macbeth and Antony. And let us finally recall the words of deep moral wisdom he speaks to his erring mother :

Assume a virtue, if you have it not,
 That monster, custom, who all sense doth eat,

Of habits evil, is angel yet in this,
That to the use of actions fair and good
He likewise gives a frock or livery,
That is aptly put on. Refrain tonight ;
And that shall lend a kind of easiness
To the next abstinence.

In all this we hear the voice, not of a shocked youthful sensibility, but of the mature wisdom of a middle-aged person with a long and complex experience of life. Bradley's explanation of Hamlet's brooding despair as the natural revulsion of young idealistic sensibility at the sight of unnatural vices, thus, falls short of requirements. Hamlet is a strange compound of *raw sensibility* and *seasoned cynicism*, of *wondering inexperience* and the most *deep-eyed wisdom*. He could not possibly be both sensitive and cynical, both inexperienced and mature at the same moment. But the play shows him exactly like that, even though Shakespeare's tremendous artistic power might have served in a great measure to tone down distinctions by making everything intensely vivid. *If that is so, Hamlet's obsessive emotions could not come from a single integral personality* and, therefore, they could hardly at all be the emotions of the play. They unmistakably point to an extra-dramatic subjective source.

There is finally the idea advanced by L. L. Schücking^a and others of Hamlet being Shakespeare's rendering of a familiar concept of the contemporary mind—that of a morbid melancholic. Studies of contemporary treatises on the subject such as Timothy Bright's *A Treatise of Melancholy* (1586) and the translation of Du Laurens's French work *On the Diseases of Melancholy* published in 1599 would I think suggest that Shakespeare was influenced by the ideas contained in these works while writing *Hamlet*. But to conclude from it that Hamlet was Shakespeare's version of a melancholy person would not only be going too far ; it would be distorting the whole picture and misreading its extremely complex character. In the first place, if Hamlet was essentially a melancholic character, why should everyone knowing him feel at the sight of his melancholy ways that an unaccountable change had come upon him ? Not only does Hamlet say of himself :

I have of late, —but wherefore I know not, —lost all my mirth, foregone
all custom of exercises.....

but Claudius too, in apprising Rosencrantz and Guildenstern of Hamlet's condition, says :

Something you have heard
Of Hamlet's transformation ; so I call it,
Since nor the exterior nor the inward man
Resembles that it was. (I. ii)

And this is further confirmed by Gertrude's describing him as her "too much changed son". It may of course be claimed that this great change in Hamlet was just the result of the sudden upheaval of the melancholy spirit in him. But even then there would remain a great many incongruities between the melancholy Hamlet and the concept of the typically melancholy person. For example, Hamlet is not "spoiled of all his graces" or "deprived of Judgment, reason and counsel" ; nor is he an "enemy of men", all of which, according to du Laurens, he should have been. Besides, even apart from the uncharacteristic transformation in middle youth from a normal into a melancholic person, *Hamlet undergoes yet another transformation in the fifth act*. He becomes a gently cynical all accepting philosopher—which no traditional melancholic had ever been conceived of doing. The most individual and mysterious elements of Hamlet's mind seem to have come to Shakespeare not from any specific external sources, but from the depths of an inner discomposure caused by the consciousness of certain insoluble contradictions of life which defied all efforts at harmonious expression.

X. THE GREAT FIFTH ACT TRANSFORMATION

The play of *Hamlet* is full of confusion. But the deepest confusion comes towards the end of the play. That it has not been as much noticed as it might have been is a tribute to the supreme imaginative art of Shakespeare which could absolutely vivify anything it came across at this stage. From the Grave-diggers' Scene onward there is a strange relaxation of the psychological tension in Hamlet and, consequently, in the general atmosphere of the play. The gnawing sense of evil in man is somewhat quietened. If the Nessus' shirt does not fall off, at least its fatal grip on Hamlet's soul loosens, allowing him to breathe more freely. And as he starts breathing more freely, what impresses him as he looks at life is not an intolerable concentration of human evil but a spectacle of universal morta-

lity. This feeling is expressed in words of overwhelming power at first by the Grave-diggers and then by Hamlet himself through the greater part of the scene until the mourners appear with their sad burden. The whole scene is an elegiac chant on the unspeakable vanity of human greatness and on the senselessness of all distinctions which are pathetically nullified by death and decay. The mighty Alexander, the ebullient Yorick and the pathetic Ophelia have all returned to the dust of the earth, and the haunting refrain of the Grave-digger's song sums up the fate of one and all :

O ! a pit of clay for to be made
For such a guest is meet.

Even in the later part of the scene Hamlet's verbal violence towards Laertes does not embody any real bitterness. On the other hand, the broadening of the vision, the release from the prison-house of an obsessive agony, is suggested in a cosmic expansion of the imaginative vision :

Who is he whose grief
Bears such an emphasis ? Whose phrase of sorrow
Conjures the wandering stars, and makes them stand
Like wonder-wounded hearers ?

And the expansion of vision in the image is deeply suggestive. The cry of agony rising from Laertes' stricken heart which seems to arrest the stars in their courses assumes a symbolical character and suggests the eternal, incurable woes of the human race. *Such a contemplative vision is not compatible with a burning sense of evil.* That is why when, a few lines later, we find Hamlet showing that sudden bitter hostility towards Laertes, we find him using no language of bitter passion, but a mass of strained rhetoric :

'Swounds, show me what thou 'lt do :
Woo't weep ? woo't fight ? woo't fast ? woo't tear thyself ?
Woo't drink up eisel ? eat a crocodile ?
I'll do it, Dost thou come here to whine ?
To outface me with leaping in her grave ?
Be buried quick with her, and so will I :
And, if thou prate of mountains, let them throw
Millions of acres on us, till our ground
Singeing his pate against the burning zone,
Make Ossa like a wart. Nay, an thou 'lt mouth,
I'll rant as well as thou.

The idea advanced by critics like Schücking and Dover Wilson that what offends Hamlet here and makes him act violently is the shallowness of Laertes' expression of grief for Ophelia, its note of hollow rhetoric. Such an explanation is absurd and is to be attributed to the same unconscious desire to find consistency in *Hamlet* at all costs, which has given birth to so much confusion. In the present case the confusion may well have been heightened by a touch of what Walter Pater has called the "tedious German superstition",¹⁰ i.e., a somewhat absolutist predisposition to find harmony in everything Shakespearean. First, there is no earthly reason to doubt the genuineness and depth of Laertes' feeling for his dead sister. Indeed, since his return to Denmark he has been distracted with grief and rage. Secondly, Hamlet described Laertes to Horatio only a moment ago as "a very noble youth." Then in one of the most powerful poetic passages of the play he finds Laertes' accents of grief so moving that he imagines them as casting a spell on the stars. On the other hand, as I have pointed out, it is Hamlet's violence towards Laertes beginning with

'Swounds, show me what thou 'lt do

that have a strained, clumsily rhetorical note. That even Hamlet himself is aware of this is shown by his use of the word "rant" :

Nay, an thou 'lt mouth,

I 'll rant as well as thou.

But why does Shakespeare in such a vital part of the tragedy show Hamlet expressing this momentary strained violence towards Laertes? In trying to answer this question I feel like agreeing with Dover Wilson who thinks that Bradley's description of Hamlet's exclamation :

What, the fair Ophelia !

as "one terrible pang" is wrong, and asserts that the note in it is rather one of indifference. This would indeed suit his new mood permeated with a sense of universal mortality : the mood, in Bradley's own words, in which "*nothing* matters". Immersed in this dark-grey mood of indifference, of readiness for all, Hamlet suddenly discovers that it is Ophelia's body that has been brought up for burial and that *he finds himself only remotely affected by it*, disposed to regard it as yet another piece of the universal spectacle of

mortality that he has just been pondering. But before his eyes he finds Laertes groaning under the burden of an unbearable grief and realizes that he who had once loved Ophelia and might well have been the remote cause of her tragic death, and therefore has no less reason to grieve over her than Laertes, *is not feeling any impulse of grief working within his soul* in which, for whatever reasons, all passions have been dimmed. It is this unnaturalness in himself, his inability to feel the great grief as Laertes was so naturally feeling it, that rouses in Hamlet a sudden spasm of irritation and goads him into a clumsily violent effort to outdo Laertes in his lamentation and to prove the intensity of a grief he has somehow become incapable of feeling properly. Such, to my mind, is the marvellous complexity of the things we come across in the most intense parts of this play. And this momentary deviation into a worked-up passion only deepens for us by contrast the impression of the mysterious mood of stoical resignation that has come over Hamlet since his return from the sea.

XI. THE READINESS IS ALL

The deep sense of the mortality, the mutability and the futility of all things in life saturating the Grave-diggers' Scene tinges the whole remainder of the play. In some mysterious way the sense of the one common lot awaiting all mankind, of the one great transformation in store for all members of the human race, not only causes a great relaxation of the obsessive sense of human evil, but also brings in a feeling of uncertainty in Hamlet's mind and a dim unspoken suspicion of human affairs being guided by unseen hands. Hamlet's casual tracing of the hands of Providence in the episode of his strange escape from the English hangman's hands may not by itself mean much. But what is important is that we have the feeling that Hamlet at this stage does appear to be of a fatalistic way of thinking. And amidst the overwhelming sense of life's futility ;

And a man's life's no more than to say 'One'

his restatement of his mission of vengeance before Horatio no longer has that burning bitterness of old, but is more in the nature of a duty to be performed with a clean conscience :

Does it not, think'st thee, stand me now upon
 He that hath kill'd my king and whor'd my mother,
 Popp'd in between the election and my hopes,
 Thrown out his angle for my proper life,
 And with such cozenage—is't not perfect conscience
 To quit him with this arm ? and is't not to be damned
 To let this canker of our nature come
 In further evil ?

Then comes the deepest note. Hamlet has a dark foreboding of disaster. But he brushes it off with the following words and proceeds to take part in the fencing :

Not a whit, we defy augury ; there's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to come ; if it be not to come, it will be now ; if it be not now, yet it will come ; the readiness is all. Since no man has aught of what he leaves, what is't to leave be times ? Let be.

The end will come when it will, either now or later, and regardless of whether it comes early or late, it will make a man leave all his possessions behind. Hamlet therefore does not think it worth while to bother about the possible risks involved in his joining the encounter at the treacherous Claudius's suggestion. Life has become a matter of indifference—why we do not know, just as we did not know why it had become so utterly intolerable earlier. And if its course is so uncertain, why trouble to worry about it ? The excruciating sense of evil—of human evil—has all but vanished. In this uncertain voyage of life the one virtue that Hamlet recommends to himself is the “readiness” to take anything that comes, to suffer unmoved “the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune”, to be like the idealized image of his friend Horatio who has been

As one, in suffering all, that suffers nothing,
 A man that fortune's buffets and rewards
 Has ta'en with equal thanks,

It is these last two scenes of *Hamlet* that form its great spiritual link with *King Lear*. The lesson that the soul of Hamlet, mysteriously released from the torturing grip of evil, has learnt is that “the readiness is all” ; and it is not much different from the great lesson of stoical endurance preached by the at once saintly and valiant Edgar :

Men must endure
 Their going hence even as their coming hither :
 Ripeness is all.

XII. A RECAPITULATION

Let us now try on the basis of the above observations, to sum up the impression of this first appearance of a confused duality of vision in the play of *Hamlet*. Hamlet is obsessed with an intolerable sense of human baseness at the conduct of his uncle and his mother, an obsession which is further intensified by the revelations of the ghost. But even apart from the glaring overtones of his cynical and misogynic gloom, there are other reasons for thinking that this sense of evil and this despair born of it are not entirely the product of the dramatic situation, but are reflections of some profound subjective feeling groping for expression in the mind of the dramatist himself and trying, largely in vain, to fit itself into the play's emotional pattern. One of the reasons is that he keeps postponing the act of revenge, though there is no evidence of any absence of opportunity, as there might well have been in the source play. The second is that he assumes a madness which, without at all helping him in his enterprise, only provides him with pretexts for venting his outraged feelings about man's baseness and woman's frailty. Yet another reason for tracing these reactions of Hamlet to an extra-dramatic subjective source is that these cynical and misogynic feelings which should, dramatically speaking, belong to Hamlet alone and to none else are found seeping forth every now and then through the speeches of several characters who are in no way like him. This fact and the psychologically untenable alternation of tender youthful sensibility and mature, and at times cynical, wisdom in Hamlet's speeches show that Hamlet's emotions could not possibly come from a single dramatic character and must, therefore, be traced to an extra-dramatic source. These torturing thoughts, inexpressible in action, sicken the very soul of Hamlet because he finds the interpretation of certain aspects of life they offer incredible, yet real, and because he is unable shift the burden of man's wickedness on to any other agency. The result is that, in spite of many passing comments on Fate and its doings, the responsibility for all the unbearable evil that Hamlet or Shakespeare has encountered is put by implication squarely on character, on human nature, till the end of the fourth act. *And it is in this fact that the unbearableness of the feeling lies.* How does man, so "noble in reason", so "infinite in faculty" etc. stoop to such unfathomable depths of baseness? The thought rouses not only

infinite indignation but a darkness of despair which makes Hamlet repeatedly doubt the wisdom of continuing life in what Shakespeare at many other places describes as "this vile world".

But quite a new note creeps in with the opening of the last act. The two grave-digging clowns introduce a note of gently deepening pathos induced by the contemplation of human mortality and the sad mutability of things. Into this atmosphere enters a new Hamlet. In spite of having encountered yet another spot of evil in Claudius's cowardly plot to send him to his death in England, he appears strangely relaxed from the former agonizing grip of evil and joins the clowns in making profound comments on the pathetic transience and mutability which appear to him to govern the lives of all human beings alike—Alexander, Yorick, Ophelia—and reduce them all to the same mouldy insignificance. No longer do the monstrous sins of Claudius and Gertrude gall his spirit. On the other hand, it is Laertes' grief over his dead sister which moves him deeply enough to make him think of it as something symbolical of eternal human suffering. The queen's description of him as "patient as the female dove" is not a mere passing phrase; it fits Hamlet's curiously changed disposition remarkably well. In narrating his escape he vaguely talks of a divinity shaping our ends and says strangely little about the further evidence of Claudius's monstrous villainy. He fools light-heartedly with Osric and, with a careless disregard of the risks involved, accepts Claudius's invitation to join a fencing contest with Laertes. He had thought "too precisely on the event" before. Now he does not think at all. Caution and deliberation no longer have much value for him. The end will come when it will; only let it not find man unprepared. The constant readiness to meet anything that comes is all that is required of a proper man. His attitude towards Laertes is one of genuine affection. No trace of his extreme bitterness towards his mother remains. Even after realizing that he has been fatally wounded as a result of Claudius's treacherous plot and while killing him off, he utters only one brief fierce sentence and relapses into his gentle stoicism.

XIII. CRITICS' DETERMINATION TO FIND DRAMATIC HARMONY

A great deal of avoidable controversy has, to my mind, resulted from the reluctance of so many distinguished critics to recognise the

elements of incongruity in *Hamlet* and to draw the consequent conclusion that neither the play nor its central character is all of a piece. The profound change in Hamlet's entire response to life that we find from the opening of the fifth act has been passed over by many critics, because to recognise this change in all its intensity would mean questioning the integrity of Shakespeare's art in the play very seriously. Bradley's deeper understanding tells him that after Hamlet's return from the sea "*nothing* matters" to him. Yet, in an unconscious effort to defend the dramatic integrity of the play and of Hamlet's character, he says :

In what spirit does he return ? Unquestionably, I think, we can discover a certain change, though it is not great.

What greater change could there be from a burning, intolerable sense of evil to an attitude to which nothing mattered ? It is impossible that Bradley had not *felt* the profundity of the change ; he was only unconsciously defending the integrity of Shakespeare's dramatic imagination at the cost of the truth of direct impression. Dover Wilson seems to make a mistake in the other direction, but out of the same desire to explain away the incongruity. One moment, relying on his direct impression, he says :

Hamlet returns from his voyage a changed man, with an air of self-possession greater than at any other time of the play. We are not told why.

And yet, almost immediately after, he tries to explain that

The real source of the change is, of course, a technical one. The requirements of tragic drama compel his creator to win back our respect for him before the end.

What a strange defence for Shakespeare to think that he could find no worthier way of restoring our supposedly lost respect for his tragic hero than to wrench his character unaccountably into something quite unlike what it was ! And this technical manoeuvre on the part of his creator has, according to the critic, the effect of raising Hamlet to the level of "the complete Prince ; dignified, coolly reflective". In his unconscious resolve to find congruity everywhere in the play, Dover Wilson fails to see that a "complete Prince" would have been too well aware of his grave princely responsibilities, especially in the prevailing situation ; to recklessly enter a fencing bout arranged by his mortal enemy. The point has been well put by Schücking :

And lastly it is incomprehensible that he should have so completely lost his old shrewdness and suspicion as to seem unaware of the dangerous position into which his return has brought him ; indeed of the sword of Damocles that is now suspended above his head.

Schücking himself, of course, in thinking that

In giving the part of the grave-digger to the clown Shakespeare is catering for the taste of the public, who liked to have the tragic tension broken now and again.

fails to see that the grave-digger in making his profound reiterative comments on human mortality and mutability was, while relieving one kind of tragic tension, building up a new kind of tragic atmosphere, setting the stage as it were for the strangely transformed Hamlet to utter his new philosophy of indifference. All these mistakes made by brilliant minds are the result of their conscious or unconscious refusal to accept the testimony of their direct impressions in their quest after non-existent harmonies ; the result of their failure to recognise the undeniable presence of two glaring incongruities in the play : Hamlet's first transformation into a bitter cynic and misogynist, and his second and even stranger transformation into a gentle, all-accepting stoic.

The element of intrusive subjectivity that makes its presence felt in Shakespearean drama from about 1600 resolves itself into increasingly traceable patterns as we pass into the other "problem plays". But in its first effective appearance in *Hamlet* its operations are extremely diffuse. It flows into so many channels and emerges in so many forms that it creates an inextricable web of confusion. And yet a proper study of the components of the tangle will show that the strained and mixed vision, the marks of a spiritual distemper, which draw our wondering attention for the first time in *Hamlet* only signify the beginning of a process which develops into a complex chain in the other "problem plays" and through the middle and the late tragedies, until it emerges metamorphosed, virtually turned into its opposite, in the final plays.

XIV. THE GREAT THOUGHT-GAP

One of the chief components of what I should like to call the disintegrating influence operating in *Hamlet* is an intense, corrosive sense of evil in man and in woman. It is of such a nature and intensity

that Shakespeare finds it exceedingly difficult at this stage to accommodate it in the many-toned objectivity of his dramatic vision. Not that Shakespeare had not encountered the ugliness of evil before. He certainly had. But he had been more or less able to weave it up into the harmony of his earlier dramatic patterns. But this brand of evil which he had to reckon with for the first time while writing *Hamlet* was something new. Its impact on his world vision was in the nature of a shattering earthquake changing the whole aspect of the landscape, destroying its unity. Here Shakespeare had come across a certain kind of evil, certain unaccountable propensities, in human nature which he found painfully difficult to reconcile with the accepted notions about man's reason and his higher impulses. This is the central dark patch in *Hamlet* which at this stage obstinately refuses to resolve itself into an integral part of Shakespeare's vision of life.

The question of the responsibility for this horror of evil also calls up further confusion. Shakespeare certainly shared something of the Renaissance emphasis on man and the Renaissance insistence on freedom and responsibility—though he cannot be said to have had any clear or definite views on such matters. Hamlet-Shakespeare accordingly put the responsibility for their base actions on Claudius and Gertrude, just as he put the responsibility for Horatio's goodness on Horatio himself. But the terrible thought was: if this sickening baseness had to be fully attributed to its performers, what was to be thought of human nature and what would be the point in continuing to live in a world in which such horribly evil fellow-beings existed? Up to this point Hamlet's thought-processes are perceptible, even though their ultimate origins might lie buried in mystery. But then *there is a gap* which constitutes one of the chief artistic blemishes in the play. After this thought-gap the entire tone of the drama changes with the appearance of the grave-diggers, and Hamlet's feelings about life—which constitute the central thought-process of the play—reappear strangely transformed. As I have tried to show, the burning sense of evil has all but vanished and has been replaced by a mood in which a sense of the "sad mortality" of human existence is mingled with a gentle stoical resignation reflected in everything that he says and does in the last two scenes of the play and most of all in the strange lack of excitement with which he meets

Laertes' revelation of the King's treacherous plot which has undone him.

Apart from the passing references to the doings of Fate and Fortune only two brief isolated links can be traced in this mystery-gap between Hamlet's earlier and later feelings. One is his somewhat unwarranted idealization of Horatio (III. ii) as a man who "in suffering all" "suffers nothing", who is not "passion's slave". This is the only utterance that may be thought to anticipate the fifth act philosophy of "the readiness is all". But this brief and dramatically unaccountable yearning for the state of the passionless man is again drowned in an overwhelming sense of evil. The second link is provided by the crazy-seeming comments on the mortality that swallows up kings as well as beggars made by Hamlet (IV. iii) on being questioned on the whereabouts of Polonius's corpse. This again is perhaps the only utterance which may be regarded as a precursor of Hamlet's profound comments on universal mortality and mutability in the Grave-diggers' Scene. But neither the first nor the second link really links up the earlier with the later Hamlet. They stand like a couple of sandbanks peering out of a great gulf.

It is the unrevealed contents of the thought-gap existing between the fourth and fifth acts of the play, between Hamlet's earlier and later attitudes, that constitute the second mystery in the play and link it up with the other "problem plays" and ultimately with the works that follow. How did Hamlet's intolerable sense of evil get transformed into that gentle, brooding stoicism? What solution had he found to the life-darkening problem of evil that had induced this new mood? The answer to this vital question, to my mind, is that he found no solution whatever; but that in course of his brooding on this painful question his attitude towards human evil and the part it plays in life had gone through a profound change. *This change, however, was yet of such an instinctive and nebulous nature that it was not possible to bring it out in a set of proper transitional dramatic scenes.* This great transformation of Hamlet's reactions, therefore, remains unrecorded in the drama, and only its results are perceptible in the fifth act. We realize that the philosophical emphasis has changed, that *fate* or the mysterious scheme of things had risen from a minor to a major governing position, and that *character* or human responsibility which used to be the driving

force has become—at least momentarily—subordinated to it. But the process through which this reversal of feeling comes about remains obscure here and reveals itself gradually through the further unfolding of the tragic vision.

XV. CONTRADICTION : UNREALITY : READINESS FOR ALL

What was the nature of Hamlet's transformation ? Its centre lay in the rise of a profound sense of contradiction in life. What could be the meaning of this interplay of contrary impulses in life ? How could Claudius be so horribly vile and Horatio so wonderfully good ? How could Gertrude be so filthy and Ophelia so angelically pure, and each be entirely responsible for what he or she was and did ? The more Hamlet brooded over the matter, he *felt* that the question of human responsibility was an extremely puzzling question ; that whether man had adequate free will to regulate his characteristic inherent impulses was a question to which no clear answer was available. The result was a slackening of the sense of human responsibility and a consequent slackening of the sense of human evil. Was Claudius after all so completely responsible for the evils he did ? Was Gertrude ? Was Polonius, the "wretched, rash, intruding fool" really responsible for what had happened to him ? Hamlet was not so sure. From drifting down the dark canyon of his brooding on the problem of human evil he had found himself borne into a wider sea of mystery where the ultimate sources of human actions had become untraceable.

This uncertainty about human responsibility is joined with the other component of Hamlet's fifth act stoicism : a deep sense of the mutability, the mortality and, consequently, the futility of human existence. His father's glorious royal career had been cut off by foul murder. He had never dreamt of killing old Polonius, and yet Polonius *had* died at his hands. The sweet Ophelia in the prime of her beauty and youth went mad and was drowned. His own "excellent friends" Rosencrantz and Guildenstern had connived at sending him to his death, and then he had foiled their plans and sent them to their death instead. The "strange mutations"¹⁰ appearing with this intensity for the first time in the Shakespearean world had induced a feeling of life's sad mutability and briefness. This feeling

appears for the first time in Hamlet's comments on Polonius's corpse and rises to its great climax in the Grave-diggers' Scene, as I have pointed out, and especially in Hamlet's somewhat out-of-the-way comment :

It will be short : the interim is mine :
And a man's life's no more than to say 'One'.

In such a world-order in which life is so uncertain and changeful and the sources of human action are veiled in mystery, Hamlet's burning sense of evil loses its edge. A mysterious uncertainty and a pitiful transience unite the lots of all human beings, good and bad, and reduce them all to objects of puzzled contemplation. And the one indubitable virtue that the Hamlet of the fifth act finds necessary and commendable in all human beings—perhaps in Claudius and Gertrude as much as in Horatio and himself—is the “readiness” to meet with gentle stoical acceptance whatever the uncertain winds of the world might bring us up to face. And this is the thought, as I have already suggested, that unites *Hamlet* with *King Lear* and forms one of the central links in the chain of development, I intend to trace.

XVI. CONFUSION OF VALUES : INFILTRATION OF THE UNCONSCIOUS

The duality of vision in *Hamlet*, thus, consists in a *diffuse confrontation of opposites*. Character *is* Fate, and yet this central assumption has to face such implied questions as : Are people really responsible for all the good and all the evil they do ? Do we really understand the sources of human actions ? Events and actions are apparently linked by chains of causation and they become increasingly so in the later tragedies. Yet the pitiful mutability of human life and the strange vicissitudes of human fortune give rise to a deep sense of mystery regarding the motive force that sets the current of life going. On the one hand, who knows whether it would be right to give all the credit for his goodness to Horatio and to put all the blame for his evil on Claudius ? There is no Fate issuing in the action of *Hamlet*, but there is an implied shadow of doubt cast on the determinant role of character in a play absolutely dominated by the character of its hero, and a sense of mortality and mutability which casts a vague shadow on causation and determinism and

recommends a readiness for everything which is not far removed from indifference.

This razor's edge alertness, this hypersensitive wit of Hamlet, so fascinating and yet so largely barren dramatically, is the outcome of this dark confusion of values. At every turn of speech the utterable feelings of Hamlet break forth in a thousand wayward sparks of wit, most of which do little to advance or illuminate the relevant dramatic situation. They only make us increasingly aware of certain tumultuous feelings struggling to find a way up out of Shakespeare's unconscious or preconscious mind¹¹ and, consequently, weaving up patterns of bizarre confusion with his conscious thoughts, with what he had consciously intended the play of *Hamlet* to be. If we venture a little further along this line of thought, it may be surmised that the painfully revolting ideas and conclusions about life induced by the disturbing experiences that Shakespeare must have had, had to be largely¹² buried up in the subconscious regions of the mind because they could not be accommodated in the more or less approved framework of ideas about life occupying Shakespeare's conscious mind. But these disturbing ideas, so long hovering on the margin of the conscious, proved at this stage too strong to be kept confined to the shadowy underworld of the mind. They started percolating into the rationalized region of the conscious, creating the strange mixture of effects which we come across in *Hamlet* and which we try with infinite ingenuity to reduce to a coherent pattern of dramatic objectivity.

XVII. THE THOUGHT-GAP FILLS ITSELF OUT

Something inexpressible, then, some feelings and ideas about life—about the great fast-changing social scene all around—had come to the surface in the Shakespearean dramatic world around the year 1600 which the poet was no longer able to harmonize with what had so far been his overall vision of life and which, therefore, exerted a great strain on the integrity of his more or less well-ordered dramatic vision. (We shall try to show in a later part of this work how this vision had already been getting slowly disarranged in the pre-*Hamlet* stage). Hamlet-Shakespeare was having "bad dreams" which had spoiled his enjoyment of life and turned the

world for him into a foul dungeon (See Act II, Sc. ii). If Shakespeare had been having such "bad dreams" about life since earlier days, they had at least not been able to trouble him to the extent of distorting or confusing the general harmony of his dramatic patterns. But from *Hamlet* onward these "dreams" acquired such a critical concentration that they started colouring his vision of reality quite perceptibly and (as I hope to be able to show) slowly but surely transformed it into something strangely unlike itself.

And here again we meet with a paradox. This semi-articulate "disintegrating" feeling making such a powerful first appearance in *Hamlet* would naturally be expected to have an undermining effect on Shakespeare's dramatic vision and, consequently, on his dramatic art in the post-*Hamlet* plays. And indeed, a lot of painful confusion and fluctuation of values and the most amazing fluctuation of dramatic level are to be found in the works of the tragic period (1600-1607) as a whole. (Compare, for example, the artistic levels of *Othello*, *Lear* and *Macbeth* with those of *Troilus*, *All's Well* and *Timon*). Yet the overall effect of the working of this puzzled awareness of evil, this "disintegrating" influence, has been not to undermine drama but to deepen and intensify it. The strange new experience, or rather this crucial intensification of earlier experience, which almost threatened to plunge drama into chaos, also gave it a new dimension of depth and richness it never had before. And it is to this intrusive vein of questioning and negation, to the chaos in the soul of its hero, however much it may have disturbed dramatic integrity, is largely due the undying charm of *Hamlet*.

From about 1600 these two opposite visions (or rather these two opposite aspects of the vision as a whole)—the vision, broadly speaking, representing Shakespeare's earlier impressions of life in which reason and goodness had an overall dominance and the vision of the new consciousness of evil and the painful questioning about its meaning—keep meeting one another in constantly varying proportions and with remarkably different results. They sometimes interpenetrate in such a manner as to create a powerful, though momentary, unity of opposites. On other occasions, the struggle between the two visions rises above their unity, resulting in a relative or decisive dominance of the one or the other. The first serious

encounter in *Hamlet*, despite its world-shaking character, is diffuse and indecisive, though the balance stands rather tilted in favour of the new dark negative vision. But from then on the two visions operate in a widely fluctuating course. In *Troilus and Cressida* and *All's Well* the negative vision practically holds the stage, while the elements of the earlier vision are so suppressed as to have virtually disappeared (as in *Troilus*) or to have been reduced to a pale mockery (as in *All's Well*). In *Othello* a momentary reversal of the process takes place. There Shakespeare's earlier dramatic vision powerfully regains its balance, brings the darker vision under control (by keeping the evil focus mainly confined to a single individual) and, by achieving a rich organic unity with it, succeeds in creating a marvel of tragic depth and beauty. The glorious unity of opposites is, however, soon broken in *Measure for Measure*. There the dark strain of cynical pessimism succeeds in both deepening and disarranging drama, and then causing its virtual collapse in *Timon* where an intolerable sense of human baseness bursts all bounds of reason and art. Then comes the most marvellous regeneration of Shakespeare's dramatic imagination in *King Lear* and *Macbeth*. This time, however, what had started in *Hamlet* as an acid sensation of evil burning its way through the "barrier of the unconscious", emerges as an integral part, in fact as the vital aspect, of Shakespeare's vision of life, dominates the scene, and at the same time forms the most moving patterns of confrontation with the deep human values so long cherished by him. The stately unfolding of this process leading to the inscrutable triumph of evil in these two overwhelming plays gives rise to profound philosophical questions to which Shakespeare knew no answer. The inextricable confusion has the effect of freezing up the dramatic imagination in *Coriolanus* in which the negative vision emerges for the last time in a kind barren triumph. From this point starts that total transformation of Shakespeare's vision of life which we come across, *via Antony and Cleopatra*, in the last romantic plays¹⁸.

NOTES & REFERENCES

1. See his article on *Poetry* in the Encyclopaedia Britannica (1956) and also his book, *Poetry and the Renaissance of Wonder*.
2. In *Hamlet: A study of Critical Method*.
3. In the essay "Hamlet and His Problems" in *The Sacred Wood*.
4. *The Problem of Hamlet*.
5. See Cunliffe's *Seneca and Elizabethan Tragedy*.
6. All Dover Wilson's opinions discussed here are from his work, *What Happens in Hamlet*.
7. All Bradley's opinions under reference are from his *Shakespearean Tragedy*.
8. All Schücking's opinions considered here are from his work, *The Meaning of Hamlet*.
9. See the essay on "Shakespeare's English Kings" in his *Appreciations*.
10. See J. B. Leishman's *Themes & Variations in Shakespeare's Sonnets*; esp., the last page.
11. The use of the highly illuminating primary Freudian diagram of the mind in the present context does not imply a general acceptance of Freud's theory which suffers from the grave limitation of being unevolutionary and unhistorical.
12. Not wholly; since passing flashes of such feelings and ideas are to be found in many of the earlier plays and particularly in the subjective effusions of the *Sonnets*. Around 1600, however, they must have acquired a critical quantitative concentration which had impelled them to massively penetrate the Freudian "censor-barrier" and increasingly extend their sway over the objective world of the drama.
13. The strong probability that *Coriolanus* was written after *Antony and Cleopatra* in no way weakens this conclusion. The transformation of the vision had already started in *A & C* while *Coriolanus* was a belated effort to revive the old vision which had already lost its power.

THE STRUCTURAL PATTERN OF FORD'S PLAYS

JIBESH BHATTACHARYYA

ARISTOTLE defines tragedy as 'essentially an imitation not of persons but of action and life'.¹ He considers action, or fable, or plot as the most essential element of a tragedy. What he says of tragedy, in particular, may be applied to drama, in general. In fact, it has been commonly accepted that the prime essential of a drama is plot or action. Aristotle considers action as the basic requirement of a play. Indeed, a drama without action, in which something is not continually happening, was inconceivable to the Greeks as well as to the Elizabethans. Of course, in a modern play like Ann Jellicoe's *The Sport of My Mad Mother* or Arnold Wesker's *Chips with Everything*, plot or dialogue is of secondary importance. For the modern dramatists demand 'complete artistic freedom' so that they 'don't have to please audiences or please critics or please anybody but themselves'.² But as we are not concerned with modern drama, we should rather concentrate on the Aristotelian theory and the Elizabethan practice regarding the structure of a play.

A drama, be it a tragedy or a comedy, must have a plot. A plot is not merely a story. Eric Bentley rightly points out : 'If plot is an edifice, the bricks from which it is built are events, occurrences, happenings, incidents'.³ Hence, plot may be compared to a piece of architecture. It requires architectural skill to build a plot. A story is a mere narrative consisting of incidents and happenings. It provides the raw material, the bricks and mortar, to the dramatist. The dramatist shapes those incidents and happenings into a regular plot.

Before we start examining the structural pattern of Ford's plays, it will be relevant to have some idea of the material Ford chose to deal with. Most of the Elizabethan dramatists cared little for inventing stories for their dramas. They generally used to take some popular or less popular stories or legends, some historical facts,

or some incidents of contemporary interest for dramatization. So it is not difficult to locate the source of most of the plays written in the Elizabethan period. But as we search for the possible sources of Ford's plays, we helplessly grope in the dark. Only in respect of *Perkin Warbeck* the sources are recognizable as Perkin Warbeck is a historical figure. Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* seems to have provided Ford with certain ideas for a number of his plays and G.F. Sensabaugh has suggested that all the significant plays of Ford were built on the four—humours doctrine of Burton.⁴ In fact, Ford has not taken from one single source the story that he has used in a particular play. The various incidents and characters in the plays of the period, particularly those of Shakespeare, some popular stories and legends, and a few contemporary events provided Ford with the material for the plots of his plays. Hence echoes of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *The Winter's Tale*, and a few other plays, and Massinger and Field's *The Fatal Dowry* can be found in the plays of Ford. Again, *The Broken Heart* is believed to be based on the relationship of Sir Philip Sidney and Penelope Devereux.⁵ But these only provided suggestions to Ford in the building up of certain scenes and designing certain characters in his plays. The entire plot of a play by Ford is exclusively his own creation. Herein lies the significance of his plots. He has created out of his imagination plots to suit his particular needs. So, a scene in his play may resemble that in a contemporary drama, an episode may have some connection with a contemporary event, a situation is perhaps similar to the one found in a popular story, but the artful presentation and harmonization of all these in a drama is his own. Eric Bentley's felicitous expression of his idea of plot construction may be referred to here: 'Plot results from the intervention of the artist's brain, which makes a cosmos out of events that nature has left in chaos.'⁶ Ford, as an artist, has not sought for ready-made stories for the plots of his plays; his esemplastic imagination helps him to fashion his own plots out of chaotic material.

Love and melancholy are the two dominant themes that give a sort of unity to the plays of Ford. In *The Broken Heart* Orgilus, the lover of Penthea, is melancholy as Penthea has been forcibly given in marriage to the elderly and jealous Bassanes, by her brother

Ithocles. This Orgilus-Pentheia story covers the greater portion of the drama than the Ithocles-Calantha story that suggests the title of the play. In *Love's Sacrifice* Fernando suffers initially from love-melancholy as his love for Bianca is not reciprocated. Melancholy is an abnormal state of mind and so is incestuous desire, and Ford has most daringly conceived one of his finest tragedies on this theme of incest. The plot of *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* is based on the main episode of Giovanni's incestuous love for his sister, Annabella. And here Ford's main object is to explore the psychology of the abnormal mind.

Coming to the comedies of Ford, we notice the same themes of love and melancholy dominating the plots of these plays. In *The Lover's Melancholy*, Palador, the melancholy lover, is sought to be cured of his melancholy. Here Ford shows his originality in artfully blending the popular theme of love with Burton's psychological analysis of melancholy and its causes. Love, in this play, is considered more in its pathological aspect than in the emotional one. But a mere pathological approach to love will not make a play successful and entertaining. Hence Ford blends with it instances of pure emotion as will be found in Amethus's love for Cleophila, and Thamasta's love for Parthenophil. Ford has indeed lent a novelty to his plot by borrowing the Olivia-Cesario motif from Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, in designing the Thamasta-Parthenophil episode in his play. There is, however, a remarkable difference between the love treated in the tragedies of Ford and the one treated in his comedies. While his tragedies deal with love that will not get social sanction, his comedies present pure and chaste love between husband and wife, or lover and his betrothed lady. Thus, in *The Lady's Trial* the lovers Auria and Spinella are husband and wife, in *The Queen; or, The Excellency of Her Sex* Alphonso and the Queen are spouses while in *The Fancies Chaste and Noble* Troylo-Savelli sincerely loves Castamela whom he wants to marry.

Most of the plays of Ford are built on the pattern of love-adultery-jealousy-revenge. Thus, *The Broken Heart* introduces us first to the love episode of Orgilus and Penthea. The plot is carried through their separation and Penthea's marriage with Bassanes which is considered by Penthea as an adultery. Bassanes becomes jealous of Ithocles when he finds the latter talking to Penthea in private.

Orgilus also becomes envious of Ithocles who has marred his happiness and goes to enjoy the bliss of Calantha's love. So, out of vengeance he kills Ithocles. After this the play moves rapidly to its tragic end.

In *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* the two ardent lovers, Giovanni and Annabella, are separated when it is no longer possible for them to enjoy the pleasures of love, and Annabella is married to Soranzo. But even after her marriage Giovanni thinks that she belongs to him and thus becomes jealous of Soranzo. So, when Annabella enquires, 'What, you are jealous?', Giovanni replies, 'That you shall know anon, at better leisure' (III. i). Giovanni kills his beloved Annabella to save her from supposed adultery with Soranzo, and thus he avenges himself on Soranzo revealing the strange psychology of a person who has been the victim of love.

Caraffa, the Duke of Pavia, in *Love's Sacrifice*, loves Bianca, his beautiful duchess, deeply. But soon he is made to suspect Bianca of adultery with Fernando. He becomes jealous of the paramour of his wife and plans revenge on him. He sets a trap for the lovers and murders Bianca. The play, thereafter, comes to its inevitable end in the death of both the Duke and Fernando, the rivals in love, who kill themselves out of grief.

The Lady's Trial presents the same pattern. There Auria's deep love for his wife Spinella is sought to be disturbed by his over-zealous friend Aurelio who sows the seeds of jealousy and suspicion in the heart of Auria by hinting at Spinella's adulterous relation with Adurni, a noble lord. Auria naturally becomes revengeful. But cool and rational as he is, he does not hurry to take revenge on Adurni, rather he listens calmly to the statements of both Spinella and Adurni and the result is a happy conclusion.

The same design can be traced in *The Fancies Chaste and Noble*. In this play Troylo-Savelli, in order to test the virtues of Castamela whom he loves with all his heart, plans to bring her to his uncle Octavio's house. He gives out to Livio that Octavio is a philanderer and that he keeps in his house a bevy of beauties for his own enjoyment. He suggests to Livio that the latter may make a fortune by pleasing Octavio, the marquis of Sienna, and this he can do by inducing his sister, Castamela, to join Octavio's bower of 'fancies'.

Thus, the possibility of an adulterous relation between Octavio and Castamela in the future has been indirectly hinted at. Now the revenge motif comes into play. Once Castamela joins the bower of 'fancies', Livio becomes remorseful and asks his sister to leave the house of Octavio. But as Castamela refuses to accede to his request, he becomes vengeful towards Octavio. But the play suddenly takes a happy turn as it is revealed to everybody's surprise that Octavio is a fine gentleman, that the ladies kept in his house are his own nieces, and that Troylo-Savelli himself loves Castamela.

The Queen; or, The Excellency of Her Sex presents the same scheme. Here the Queen of Arragon falls so hopelessly in love with Alphonso, the misogynist, that she not only spares his life but induces him to marry her, and even when he keeps her away and utterly neglects her, she remains loyally devoted to him. Now, by the artful insinuation of his counsellor Muretto the king suspects the Queen of having an adulterous relation with Petruchi, a young lord, and becomes jealous of him. So, with vengeful ire he sentences her to capital punishment unless some champion, to protect her honour, agrees to fight with him in a single combat and settle the dispute in the Queen's favour. Velasco finally appears as a champion for the Queen and he is joined by Petruchi and Muretto. But before any drop of blood is shed, Muretto explains his plot which, he says, he has designed to cure Alphonso of misogyny, and everything is set at right.

In *The Lover's Melancholy*, too, we may discern the same structural pattern. There Menaphon, who is in love with Thamasta, presents his suit through the young and handsome Parthenophil. But the motive of jealousy and suspicion makes its appearance as Kala, being vengeful and jealous of her mistress, Thamasta, artfully suggests to Menaphon of her mistress' adulterous relation with Parthenophil. Menaphon's jealousy is thus roused and he tells Kala, 'I'll whip/His falsehood with a vengeance.' (III. 2.). But the revelation of Parthenophil's real sex changes the colour of the situation and brings the play to a happy end.

Ford, like some of his contemporaries, has used multiple plots both in tragedies and comedies. He excels in presenting a well-knit plot for each of his plays. There is hardly any loose strand in the

texture of his plot. Praising the merits of Ford's constructive skill A. W. Ward remarks :

As to that of form, indeed, Ford is surpassed by few if any of Shakspeare's [sic] successors ; for his art is always equal to its purpose, and rarely clogged or vitiated by affectation or mannerisms.⁷

Each play of Ford has a central episode round which all other episodes move and to which they are artfully related. This central episode is mostly concerned with love which is presented in all its varieties through the various sub-plots. Moody E. Prior also makes a similar observation :

.....Ford was primarily concerned in revealing the various forms and degrees of unhappiness of unfulfilled love and managed his plot so as to provide the maximum number of variations on the problem.⁸

The tragedies of Ford deal with unfulfilled love that leads to unhappiness and death while his comedies present the triumph of true love and Moody E. Prior referred to the tragedies of Ford while making the above observation.

It is interesting to note how Ford has blended different sub-plots with the main plot in his tragedies. *The Broken Heart*, as the title indicates, concerns mainly the story of Calantha and Ithocles. For, it is Calantha who ultimately dies of a broken heart. To this principal tragic tale are interwoven three other sub-plots, namely, those of Orgilus and Penthea, Bassanes and Penthea, and Prophilus and Euphranea. Of these three sub-plots two end tragically and one ends happily for the lovers. Ford has been able to blend these sub-plots artistically with the main plot. The story of Orgilus and Penthea is almost parallel to the main story. Penthea who sincerely loves Orgilus and is ill-treated by her suspicious and jealous husband, Bassanes, goes mad and dies broken-hearted. Calantha, too, dies of a broken heart being shocked at the news of her beloved Ithocles' death. The story of Bassanes and Penthea shows the tragedy of a loveless union. And the small sub-plot of Prophilus and Euphranea depicts the bliss of love enjoyed by true lovers. Thus, these two sub-plots provide a contrast to each other. All these sub-plots are emotionally connected with the main story as they are all love stories. Again, the protagonists of the sub-plots are connected in some way or other with Ithocles and Calantha of the main plot. One thing, however, draws our attention and it is that, Penthea of

the sub-plot has been given more prominence than Calantha of the main plot. In fact, it is Penthea who first dies of a broken heart being unable to be united with her lover, Orgilus. This over-prominence given to a subsidiary story is a marked feature of Ford's tragic art.

The central theme of *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* concerns the incestuous passion of Giovanni for his sister, Annabella. To this main story are blended the Hippolita-Soranzo episode and the Bergetto-Philotis episode. The first is almost a parallel story to the main plot as it is a story of adultery. The Bergetto-Philotis episode provides a comic relief to the audience and also helps in the development of the plot. We are amused by the foolish pranks of Bergetto who is rightly rejected forthwith by Annabella with the words: 'In short, I'm sure I shall not be his wife'. (II. 6.). It is an irony of fate that the poison that Richardetto supplies to Grimaldi for murdering Soranzo, kills Bergetto, the husband-to-be of his niece, Philotis, instead. After this murder Grimaldi takes refuge in the house of the Cardinal. Thus two of the three suitors to Annabella are got rid of and Soranzo comes face to face with his formidable enemy, Giovanni. These episodes of the various suitors to Annabella add to the complication of the plot and provide variety and interest to this otherwise grim tragedy.

Love's Sacrifice has the love story of Fernando and Bianca verging on adultery as its main plot. Three subsidiary stories are interwoven with this story of love and passion. These are Fernando-Fiormonda episode, Ferentes-Colona-Julia-Morona episode, and Mauruccio-Giacopo episode. The Fernando-Fiormonda episode, where Fernando repels the advances of Fiormonda, is a contrast to the main story where Fernando declares to remain a faithful servant of Bianca. (II. 4.). And from this sub-plot rises the flame of jealousy and revenge that consumes the lovers of the main story. The main theme of love's sacrifice is reinforced, in a way, by the Ferentes-Colona-Julia-Morona sub-plot which shows how the three women sacrifice their honour and everything for the sake of their sincere love for the philanderer, Ferentes. The Mauruccio-Giacopo episode is a comic one introduced to relieve the audience of the great strain put on their minds by the dark intrigues and horrible murders pervading the whole play.

Just as Ford uses sub-plots in his tragedies for parallelism, contrast and comic-relief in order to complicate the plot and add variety and interest to the play, he has also made use of them in his comedies in an equally excellent manner. In *The Lover's Melancholy*, as the lover whose melancholy is sought to be cured is Palador, the story of Palador and Eroclea forms the nucleus of the play. And round this nucleus the love episodes concerning Menaphon-Thamasta, Amethus-Cleophila, and Parthenophil-Thamasta are made to move harmoniously. The Menaphon-Thamasta episode runs almost parallel to the main story. Both Palador and Menaphon are suffering from love-melancholy. Burton's remedy is applied to both and they are cured of their melancholy as they get their heart's desire. The Amethus-Cleophila episode is a pleasing love story in which Amethus also appears as a melancholy lover. But Ford has provided variety to these three plots by giving three different reasons for the estrangement of the three lovers Palador, Menaphon, and Amethus from their inamoratas. The Parthenophil-Thamasta episode serves to complicate the Menaphon-Thamasta episode by introducing the motive of jealousy and surcharging the atmosphere with suspense and novelty. All these sub-plots have been dexterously intertwined along with the main story to form one single strand of a homogeneous plot. Thus Eroclea of the main plot has been discovered in the guise of Parthenophil, a handsome youth, by Menaphon who brings her to Cyprus where Palador pines for her. Again, Thamasta falls deeply in love with Parthenophil who is no other person than Eroclea in disguise. And when Thamasta realizes her mistake, she turns back to her former lover, Menaphon, once again and is warmly received by him. Furthermore, Amethus gets his Cleophila only when Meleander is cured at the sight of his dearest and lost daughter, Eroclea.

The main story in *The Fancies Chaste and Noble* concerns Troylo-Savelli's device of winning fair Castamela, sister of Livio. The Flavia-Fabricio-Julio episode is almost parallel to the main plot. Just as in the main plot Castamela stays in the house of elderly Octavio without giving away her heart to him, but perhaps having a soft corner in her heart for Troylo-Savelli, so Flavia also pretends to love Julio who has married her, although her heart is with her former husband, Fabricio. This sub-plot helps to maintain the

mystery of the main plot. We do not know until we come to the end of the play that Octavio is not what he is represented to be. The mystery about Octavio is intensified by the Romanello-Castamela episode. Romanello, the brother of Flavia, is benefited by his sister who is 'new hoist up/From a lost merchant's warehouse to the title/Of a great lord's bed'. (I. 3.), and so he suspects that Livio is also similarly benefited by his sister who has joined Octavio's bower of 'fancies'. The Secco-Morosa episode, though extremely farcical, helps to maintain the atmosphere of mystery, as it is given out that Secco is married to the old Morosa so that the secret of the 'fancies' may not be exposed to the outside world. Thus, the various sub-plots in this play are skilfully related to the main story, giving the plot of the play the grace of an architectural design. The atmosphere of this Fordian comedy will surely remind one of a similar atmosphere in Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*.

The Lady's Trial is the trial of Spinella and as such the Auria-Spinella story constitutes the main plot of the play. To this main plot Ford has blended three sub-plots, namely, those of Adurni-Spinella, Guzman-Fulgoso-Amoretta, and Benatzi-Levidolche. The Adurni-Spinella story, though verging on adultery, emphasizes the exquisite beauty of Spinella, and also the pure and chaste love of Spinella for her husband. Ford has very artfully introduced the *carpe diem* theme in this sub-plot. This sub-plot also helps to complicate the main plot by providing the elements of suspicion and jealousy. Adurni's secret meeting with Spinella confirms Aurelio's suspicion of Spinella's unchaste nature. Aurelio instigates his friend Auria to punish the offender. This leads to the holding of the lady's trial. The Guzman-Fulgoso-Amoretta episode is a burlesque of the main theme of love. It supplies enough fun through Guzman's bravado, Fulgoso's buffoonery, and Amoretta's lipping and also serves as a contrast to the sincere love between Auria and Spinella of the main plot as neither Guzman nor Fulgoso is a genuine lover. The Benatzi-Levidolche episode is almost parallel to the main plot. It is genuine love for each other that brings the lovers together in both the stories after a spell of temporary estrangement. Ford seems to assert in this play that true love ultimately triumphs. The various sub-plots of this play, besides providing variety and complexity, contribute to the reinforcement of this main motif.

The main plot of *The Queen ; or, The Excellency of Her Sex* centres round the episode of the Queen's love for Alphonso and her final victory over him. To this central story are added the stories of Velasco and Salassa, Petruchi and the Queen, and a short episode of Bufo and Heraphil. The sub-plot of Velasco and Salassa is but looking at the main plot from the other end. For, whereas in the main plot it is the Queen who pines for Alphonso's love and is being ill-treated by him, in the sub-plot it is Velasco who pursues his love for Salassa and is being treated as a marionette and laughing-stock by her. The Petruchi-Queen episode, although not developed in detail, serves as the mainspring of action of this play, as the suggestion of their adulterous relation leads to the complication of the plot by providing a cause of Alphonso's misogyny. The Bufo-Heraphil episode is a contrast to the main story as by their fickleness they make us aware of the deep passion existing between the Queen and Alphonso. All these stories have been so nicely blended in the plot of the play that we can hardly find any loose end.

Our study of Ford's structural pattern will remain incomplete if we leave *Perkin Warbeck* outside its scope. Ford has displayed almost Shakespearean artistry in handling the historical material for this play. He has borrowed extensively from Francis Bacon's *The Historie of the Raigne of King Henry the Seventh* (1622), although he may have been helped by the information provided by Halle's *Chronicle* (1548), Holinshed's *Chronicles* (1577), Stowe's *Annales of England* (1580), Speed's *History of Great Britain* (1611), Gainsford's *True and Wonderful History of Perkin Warbeck* (1618), and such other sources. But it appears that Ford is mainly indebted to Bacon for the source of and inspiration for his play. Bacon concludes his account of Warbeck thus :

It was one of the longest *plays*^o of that kind that hath been in memory, and might perhaps have had another end, if he had not met with a king both wise, stout and fortunate^o.

This may have prompted Ford to dramatize the life and fate of Perkin Warbeck. Ford's uniqueness, however, lies in the fact that from the dry records of history he has shaped a play which has become one of the finest tragedies of the period.

Ford has realized the tragic possibilities of the character of Perkin Warbeck and therefore in constructing the plot of this play

he has chosen from history those incidents and situations which directly concern Warbeck and his fate. From the beginning he rouses our interest in the fate of Warbeck, and throughout the play Warbeck is never absent from our mind. To make the story of Warbeck more fascinating, he has introduced an episode which has no parallel in history. The episode of Warbeck and Katherine, indeed, is the product of a superb creative imagination. History only gives us the information that James has given Katherine, a kinswoman of his, in marriage to Warbeck in recognition of his princely status and dignity. Out of this suggestion Ford has created a beautifully romantic sub-plot that adds to the grace and charm of Warbeck's character. And for this he has created an entirely new character, that of Dalyell, which is not found in history. Ford has also made substantial alterations in the historical material while designing the death scene of Warbeck. In history Warbeck has been made to confess his imposture in public several times. By doing so he expected to be pardoned, but was finally executed. But Ford's Warbeck never makes any such confession as he does not think himself an impostor. Thus an impostor of history is transformed into a dignified and regal personality. Anne Barton also is of opinion that Ford has sought to create Warbeck as "a man born out of his time, an anachronism in a world where power now resides in the royal exchequer and the 'king-becoming graces' are an irrelevance"¹². These 'king-becoming graces' with which Perkin Warbeck has been endowed, have made all the difference between the historical Warbeck and the Warbeck of Ford's play. In history King Henry, who felt compassion for Warbeck, was left a silent spectator when Warbeck was being led to the place of execution by the supporters of the king. But the king in Ford's play is no such weakling. He is in command of the whole situation. He orders his men to treat Warbeck with proper respect. And when Warbeck has been taken away to the place of execution the king observes: '...public states, / As our particular bodies, taste most good / In health when purged of corrupted blood'. (V. 3.). Our final impression of Ford's Warbeck, however, is one of compassionate admiration, and when Warbeck exits with his last words, '...so illustrious mention / Shall blaze our names, and style us kings o'er death' (V. 3.), it appears to us that we have witnessed the exit of a truly tragic character.

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THE GREEK-GOTHIC DICHOTOMY IN EUROPEAN LITERATURE

JOGESH CHANDRA BHATTACHARYA

WHEN Aristotle laid down the concept of the Organic Unity, he had only the Hellenic Art in mind. There are, however, specimens of post-Hellenic Art which are admittedly beautiful and yet they have no organic unity. In point of fact, the Aristotelian conception of Art, on the face of it, is rather an ascetic conception, for the demand which Aristotle makes on the artist is severe. Some of the later developments in European Art simply seem to run counter to the very principle of Hellenic Art. Should we then say that the Aristotelian canon is for an age merely and has no universal validity ?

The distinction between Hellenic and other forms of beauty is apparent at once as soon as we come from Greek to Gothic architecture. Greek architecture is exquisite, not exuberant, very frugal, like all Greek beauty ; in Gothic architecture, however, the wood is lost in the trees. The luxuriant over-elaboration of Gothic art is the very antithesis of the Hellenic. The same difference may be found between Greek tragedy and Shakespearean tragedy. The Greek tragedy is a wonderfully frugal affair, and of all forms of literature the most concentrated. It is as a rule very short, for it deals with just a slice of a story or a legend where it reaches its intensest point. The Shakespearean tragedy, on the other hand, is the most Un-Greek of things, containing hundreds of episodes, characters and sub-plots. This has been the reason why Matthew Arnold (even he, who accorded Shakespeare the highest praise in his Sonnet beginning with "Others abide our question ; thou art free") has pointed out (in the Preface to his Essays, 1853) that Shakespeare was not quite happy over the richness of details. With his half-Hellenic mind, Arnold also detected the fault in Swinburne's *Atalanta in Calydon* : "It contains too much beauty for a Greek tragedy".

Here, then, we come at once to a dichotomy in European Art. The basic demand, however, which Aristotle made of Art, is, after all, there in Gothic art as well. Art, according to Aristotle, must be an Esemplasis* in the ultimate analysis. On close analysis, a formal pattern, a kind of unity will emerge even out of the bewildering variety of Gothic art. What is worse, a predominant spiritual unity is discovered in the Gothic Cathedrals, for example, in the pointed, upward look of each of their component parts. Similarly, some kind of formal unity is there even about a tragedy of Shakespeare. In the best of his tragedies, again, there are no sub-plots loosely hanging which we can do without. They are inextricably interwoven (as in *King Lear*) with the central theme of the play. As Moulton suggests: "Shakespeare makes his plot complex only to make it simple". The comic admixture is there, in order to complete that segment of life with which the tragedy deals. But then, there is a profound spiritual unity in all the tragedies of Shakespeare. The ultimate impression of a Shakespearean tragedy is not a multiplicity, but a unity—unity, for instance, in a single cry of anguish (as in *King Lear*, the five-times repeated 'Never') into which the entire tragedy seems to dissolve, and that remains the abiding impression. Here, then, is Esemplasis after all. Thus, we find that the basic demand of Aristotle is of universal validity.

In fairness to Aristotle, however, one particular point must be noted. The Aristotelian canon that the more concentrated form of Art is the more convincing holds good in post-classical literature as well. Take, for example, *Othello* and *Hamlet*. Which of the two is the more convincing as a tragedy, or which, in short, has the more overpowering effect? The answer will certainly be '*Othello*', simply because it is much the more concentrated. *Hamlet*, of course, has other points of interest about it, but the tragic marvel of *Othello* is more convincing. And with all deference due to Shakespeare we must say that with regard to sheer marvel of tragedy Ibsen's *Ghosts* (especially in its 2nd and 3rd Acts) scores higher than both. A kind of doom is hanging over the book from the very beginning, every single detail ruthlessly converging to the total effect. The result

* The word 'Esemplasis' literally means 'forming into one' i.e., a unity resolving within itself infinite variety, a reconciliation of all opposites. cf. Coleridge: The Esemplastic Imagination: Biographia Literaria.

is a sheer undiluted tragic impression. If that is our criterion, then *The Riders to the Sea* of J. M. Synge is much more convincing than a five-act average Elizabethan Drama with many episodes. We see, then, that if we have to create the maximum of effect with the minimum of art, we must go over to Aristotle.

Lascelles Abercrombie, speaking of the world of Art in his *Theory of Poetry* says that it is "a world into which nothing, not even evil itself, can come except in the interests of the whole, as a tone necessary for the establishment of the fullest harmony. Our best efforts are directed to the realization of this world—of the world which admits of no exception to its order, the world of perfectly coherent and indestructible relationship. We can never succeed in realizing it; but we can completely achieve an ideal version of it". This takes us to the very heart of the Aristotelian system. Aristotle's canon, therefore, holds good even to this day.

The issue of the Greek-Gothic dichotomy was first introduced into English criticism by Bishop Hurd, one of the pioneers of Romantic criticism. In vindicating the claims of the *Faerie Queene* he points out two kinds of approach to a work of Art. Judged by the Hellenic standard, the *Faerie Queene* is a failure, but it stands the Gothic test.

The fact is that in the neo-classic age which succeeded the first flush of the Renaissance (when the authentic Greek art-form was reproduced), Aristotle was fatally misinterpreted. The degeneration of his canons was specially marked in France, and, since France was the arbiter in all such matters, in the whole of Europe.

Thus, the concept of the Organic Unity of Art came to be interpreted in the three Unities, the first two of which are simply not to be found in Aristotle. Again, by Unity of Action Aristotle means a deeper kind of unity from within and not the neo-classic conception of a formal and merely mechanical Unity of Action. In cases of men like Corneille and Racine, however, their native genius made up for their error, but where genius was wanting, the results were very poor indeed.

A similar fate overtook the other Aristotelian concept of the Universality of Art. It is a very great mistake to suppose that the Aristotelian Universal is a very antithesis of the individual; it is

simply the *necessary*, as what is logically necessary now, would be so for all time. The neo-classics took the term as meaning the general, the typical, the representative of a class; and all the while they thought that they were simply taking their stand on Aristotelian canons. Thus it was that Dr. Johnson criticised the Dover Cliff passage in *King Lear* for having too many particulars. It was not sufficiently generalised, and so it could not satisfy Dr. Johnson. Similarly, the Aristotelian canon of beauty in Art was transformed. Beauty for Aristotle consisted in imposing the order of Art on the native chaos of life. The neo-classics took the principle of symmetry in its stead. The beautiful for them was reduced to the merely pretty. This pretty trimness is to be found in everything in the neo-classic age. The French and the Dutch gardens of this period were exquisite specimens of neatness and geometric precision. The trimness of the heroic couplet, too, is an instance in point. The Romantic reaction, however, substituted the wild and the irregular for the trim and the dainty. It was almost as absurd in its exaggeration as the other side. Thus, William Kent, one of the two great leaders of the landscape gardening in England (the only distinctive contribution of England to the Romantic Reaction) laid down the rule of gardening in the words: "Nature abhors a straight line". The essence of the Romantic movement is, in fact, summed up in this expression. The difference between the neo-classics and the Romantics is apparent from their respective handling of the heroic couplet. The couplet of Pope, for example, gives the impression of a straight line at the very reading, whereas the initial impression of the heroic couplet of Keats is that of blank verse.

England, however, remained comparatively free from the French neo-classic error which inflicted the whole of Europe, because the English genius is more Gothic than Greek. The chief works of Chaucer and Shakespeare, for instance, have a rich, populous, multifarious and 'multitudinous' character. The whole world of Elizabethan literature was unmistakably Gothic in which the Unities never took root. The Shakespearean world is surely a Gothic world if ever there was such a thing. Only with Milton's *Samson Agonistes* English Literature goes back to the authentic Greek drama. Even Addison and Pope protested against the artificiality of the Dutch garden. The 18th century English novelists belonged to the world of Pope

and Johnson; and yet their novels have an innate prolixity—full as they are of unnecessary episodes and digressions. The Romantic again, is certainly a variation of the Gothic. The initial stages of the Romantic movement were actually marked by a new admiration for Gothic architecture. Thus, the *Eve of St. Agnes*, a typical product of the Romantic type of literature, is full of marvellous details, having no organic unity. Here is the same abundance, one might say redundancy, of detail as in a Gothic Cathedral.

Much of modern European literature, however, is unconsciously Greek in its remarkable concentration and spareness. The pioneer in this field was Henrik Ibsen. The One-act play to-day is a very fine approximation to Greek drama. It cannot afford any irrelevance or prolixity whatever. So, too, in certain ways is the modern short story. The principle laid down by Chekov that "if there is a gun hanging on the wall in the first chapter, it must go off in the second or the third," is virtually the same as that of Aristotle. Everything in Art must be functional; there must be no unnecessary detail. And yet there is no conscious discipleship of Aristotle.

Modern architecture in its outward features is not Greek at all. Yet it is purely Greek in spirit—in its severe simplicity, economy and frugality of details. The neo-classic age imitated the details and missed the Hellenic spirit. The 17th century baroque architecture was Greek in form, but not in spirit. It imitated the Ionic and the Corinthian columns, but made them half-imbedded in the wall. The columns thus were not performing their function, they were there only for show. The very motto of modern architecture, however, is sought to be summed up in the word "functional". The form of the building is suggested by the use to which it will be put—for a factory, e.g., for a laboratory or for a University. This is simply a corollary of the Greek demand of the organic unity. The form in each case is an index to the content.

This does not mean however that the Gothic has gone for ever. The clash and contest between the two contrasted art-forms still persist. Thus, alongside tense one-act plays we find long, meandering novels like the *Forsyte Saga*. Even in modern drama we discover the Gothic qualities here and there. Bernard Shaw, for example, is an avowed disciple of Ibsen. And yet his dramas are full of

irrelevancies and digressions. Perhaps Shaw does not know how Shakespearean he is in this respect. Talking too much is a principal characteristic in a typically Shavian drama.

The modern times have witnessed rather an interesting phenomenon—a kind of third art-form in the modern plotless novel which has also come to influence a portion of drama. It is neither Gothic nor Greek, but simply mirrors a "Stream of consciousness" which is as chaotic as imaginable. Even about the Gothic there is a profound spiritual unity; but here there is not even the pretence at unity, rather there is a conscious and blatant negation of it. Even Bernard Shaw in his Preface to *Major Barbara* has stated explicitly: "I, the dramatist, whose function it is to show the connexion between things which lie haphazard...". But in the Stream of consciousness novels the very objective is the haphazard order of events. There is not even the question of a unity of impression. This, however, is a bold and entirely new experiment, unprecedented in literary history.

JANE AUSTEN'S PRESENTATION OF WOMEN CHARACTERS

ATMA RAM SHARMA

JANE AUSTEN largely concentrates on female characters, as hers is a woman's world. Both in her letters and novels she describes more women than men. The families in her novels have a greater number of female members, and the characters often speak confidently about women alone. David Daiches notes two major methods of character-analysis used by novelists.

Should the personalities of characters in fiction emerge from a chronological account of a group of events and the characters' reactions to those events, or is it the duty of the novelist to take time off, as it were, in order to give a rounded description of the characters at the point when they are introduced into the story? Novelists have employed either of these two methods, and some have employed both at once.¹

Jane Austen is a novelist who combines both these modes. Within the general framework of her technique she employs some other methods, too. The object of this article is to examine, in brief, her art of presenting her women characters.

She introduces her major women characters unobtrusively. She lets them emerge from the chronological account of events and incidents. The method is aptly suited to the study of complex characters. In the beginning Elizabeth Bennet is only "little Lizzy", not liked by her mother. Her father, however, likes her. Anne Eliot is introduced as an insignificant creature, "She was an only Anne", almost nothing to her father and sister (PP., p. 5).

Jane Austen's favourite technique in her earlier novels is to begin with two girls at a time. In the earlier part Isabella Thorpe is Catherine Morland's companion; in the later, Miss Tilney. In the same way Elizabeth Bennet and Jane Bennet, Elinor Dashwood and Marianne Dashwood form pairs. This pattern helps in highlighting

the characteristics of her heroines through implied comparisons. This also adds to the variety and complexity of her female characters.

As Jane Austen herself loved Cassandra, this mode of study was particularly suited to her art. This relationship was deeply and authentically known to her ; and she could effectively transform her own experience in her works. It may be noted that no two sisters in her novels quarrel or clash together seriously. On the contrary, they often encourage and cheer each other up. In fact, to have a sister is a coveted comfort in the world of Jane Austen. Miss Tilney feels lonely without a sister : "I have no sister, you know—and though my brothers are very affectionate, and Henry is a great deal here, which I am most thankful for, it is impossible for me not to be often solitary." (NA, p. 180)

Despite their different natures, there always exists a healthy relationship between two sisters or two young female friends. Where there are no two real sisters, a female friend is often there to serve as a sister.

Although a sister of a female friend is an essential being, yet greater stress is laid on the heroine herself. For example, both Charlotte Lucas and Jane Bennet become sufficiently significant characters in the earlier chapters. But with a very effective stroke a searchlight is turned on Elizabeth Bennet, the heroine of the piece : "Occupied in observing Mr. Bingley's attention to her sister, Elizabeth was far from suspecting that she was herself becoming an object of some interest in the eyes of his friend." (PP, p. 23). Thenceforth, there is greater emphasis on the Elizabeth-Darcy affair. At the outset, Fanny Price is a mere nobody. However, she steadily gathers some strength and confidence. In both *Emma* and *Persuasion* the heroines are the pivotal figures.

The heroines are described and studied in contrast with other characters in relation to the same or similar situations. Ian Watt observes : "The primary importance of *Sense and Sensibility* in the history of the novel—and for us—is that in it Jane Austen developed for the first time a narrative form which fully articulated the conflict between the contrary tendencies of the age: between reason and rapture, between the observing mind and the feeling heart, between being sensible and being sensitive."² The study in contrast is peculiarly

interesting in the novel. It is implied not only in the title of the novel, but also in a great many situations and incidents in it. These comparisons or contrasts are of material advantage. Sometimes they lead to fresh views and reactions, and quite often these bring to force the virtuous and noble nature of good people by highlighting the dark shades of mean or unfeeling people. The central women characters in this way become very lively. The two eldest and the two youngest sisters in the Bennet household form two contrasting sets. This also enables Jane Austen to create and suggest a more comprehensive spectrum of life. Marianne Dashwood, for example, attacks Elinor Dashwood for holding that "wealth has much to do with happiness", although she herself assumes that "a family cannot very well be maintained" on less than two thousand pounds a year—twice what Elinor sees as the pre-requisite of happiness. These are two contrasting views. Lucy Steele's plea for more money in marriage constitutes a glaring contrast, as the selfish motive is also added now. Lucy Steele explains her view when Edward Ferrars is threatened with disinheritance in case he marries her: "He has only two thousand pounds of his own; it would be madness to marry upon that, though for my own part I could give up every prospect of more without a sigh." (SS, p. 147). The contrasting reactions provide a clue to the real natures of Jane Austen's characters. The characters react differently when Willoughby's villainous nature is known to all. Elinor Dashwood suggests to her sister to console herself with the lesser evil: "Have you no comforts, no friends? Is your loss such as leaves no opening for consolation? Much as you suffer now, think of what you would have suffered if the discovery of his character had been delayed to a later period—if your engagement had been carried on for months and months...." (SS, p. 186). To the well-meaning Mrs. Jennings, consolation is of different sort: "But there is one comfort, my dear Miss Marianne; he is not the only young man in the world having; and with your pretty face you will never want admirers." (SS, p. 192)

The contrastive way also helps in suggesting the intensity of situations and feelings, as sometimes it provides a scene for both illusion and reality. For example, disappointed in her own love-affair, Marianne anticipates the happy lot of her sister. But she is mistaken, since the latter is also not happy:

I distress you, leave me, hate me : but do not torture me so—Happy, happy Elinor, you cannot have an idea of what I suffer. Do you call me happy, Marianne : Ah : if you knew.....(SS, p. 185).

The way these characters react to situations is indicative of their true nature. For instance, the reactions to Mr. Collins's first letter to Mr. Bennet are different with different people (PP, pp. 63, 65). Mrs. Bennet finds some sense in the letter if the writer has a mind to marry one of her daughters. To simple Jane Bennet, the wish to be a "peace-making gentleman" is certainly to his credit, though she does not know how the wish can be fulfilled. The pedant, Mary Bennet, "in point of composition his letter does not seem defective." To the flirts, Catherine and Lydia, neither the letter nor its writer is of any significance. It is only the keenly observant Elizabeth who discovers Mr. Collins to be an oddity. She is at once struck with his "extraordinary deference for Lady Catherine". She concludes : "Can he be a sensible man, sir ?" The novelist herself remarks a few pages later : "Mr. Collins was not a sensible man..." (PP, p. 70). In the same way there are different reactions of different characters to the proposal of Mr. Collins to Elizabeth Bennet (PP, pp. 110-114). Similarly, Elizabeth Bennet, Maria Lucas and Sir William have different ways of conducting themselves when they appear before Lady Catherine for the first time (PP, pp. 161-163). Deeply awed by the grandeur around him, Sir William makes a low bow and take his seat without saying a single word. Maria, frightened out of her senses, sits confused on one end of a chair. Elizabeth, however, is quite equal to the occasion with her self-confidence and presence of mind : "Elizabeth found herself equal to the scene, and could observe the three ladies before her composedly." Fanny Price's reactions to the theatricals show her sound judgement and virtuous nature. Almost all other characters react in a different manner. For Fanny Price, the basic objection is on moral grounds (MP, pp. 138-149). The Lyme incident brings out the salient characteristics of an active and perceptive heroine, Anne Elliot. All are stupefied at that time ; and they look to Anne for guidance and advice. This is how they react :

Mary Musgrove : She is dead, she is dead. (Herself fainting).

Henrietta : (falls down, senseless).

Captain Wentworth : Oh God : her father and mother : (nonplussed)

"A surgeon," said Anne. He caught the word ; it seemed to rouse him at once. "True, True—a surgeon."

Captain Wentworth is going when Anne directs him to seek Captain Harville's help as the latter belongs to the place. He readily agrees (P. pp. 110-111). Then Captain Wentworth also approves of her scheme to prepare the parents to receive the sad news of their daughter's accident. Her behaviour reveals to the lover her superior capability and splendid nature.

While reacting to any situation, Anne clearly gives indication of her feeling heart. She advises Captain Benwick (who is in mourning for his dead wife) to practise virtues of patience and resignation, though she knows that she herself need practise these. She takes up the question of superiority between man and woman—making Captain Wentworth the prototype of man and herself of woman. She defends her sex from charges of insincerity and inconstancy. She rather pleads for woman's constancy, and herself is an illustration. Despite all the onward happenings, she has loved Captain Wentworth intensely. She does not belittle the nature of male sex. She confesses that all start with a little bias : "We each begin, probably, with a little bias towards our own sex" (P, p. 234). Still she pleads that a woman should remember her lover longer, even when the hope is gone. These views apply to Anne's own constancy towards Captain Wentworth. Naturally, on being thus assured, he proposes to her, and is accepted.

The heroines are distinguished with small, but nonetheless significant strokes. So small and subtle are the strokes that a casual reader is often likely to take no notice of them. Mr. Darcy meets Wickham for the first time in Netherfield : the one turns red, the other white on seeing each other. The observant Elizabeth Bennet notes this small change and is eager to know its cause. Miss Bingley asks Mr. Darcy whether Georgiana Darcy (his sister) is of her height. The implied intention is to draw his attention towards her person. However, her scheme fails when Mr. Darcy refers to Elizabeth's height to be equal to that of his sister. This small gesture indicates Mr. Darcy's growing affection for Elizabeth.

Jane Austen holds that small actions or gestures reveal the nature of a person. In doing big things, usually all people are alike. However, in doing small things persons, particularly women, are really themselves. It is the small things they do (or undo) that show

their character. It is the small things which go to make domestic life that Jane Austen writes about. Hence the seemingly commonplace acts of omission or commission are meaningful in a study of Jane Austen's characters.⁸

The small action of Captain Wentworth's in sending away the teasing child, Walter, from Anne Elliot's back, gives to Anne Elliot a surer clue to Wentworth's finer sensibility and judgement :

...and he was resolutely borne away, before she knew that Captain Wentworth had done it.

Her sensations on the discovery made her perfectly speechless. She could not even thank him... His kindness in stepping forward to her relief—the manner—the silence in which it had passed—the little particulars of the circumstance—” (P, p. 80)

On another occasion, Wentworth's act of kindness in asking the Crofts to take Anne in the cab is small, but “this little circumstance” has had great effect on the perceptive heroine :

Yes,—he had done it. She was in the carriage, and felt that he had placed her there, that his will and his hands had done it, that she owed it to his perception of her fatigue, and his resolution to give her rest : she was very much affected by his disposition towards her which all these things made apparent. This little circumstance seemed the completion of all that had gone before she understood him. (P, p. 91)

The scene in which Captain Wentworth rescues Anne from the teasing child is indicative of his affection towards her. Sylvia H. Myers has rightly pointed out : “The scene forms one of the links in the web of feeling which unites them.” Anne, bending over the sofa, doing something for the boy who has dislocated his collarbone, is the “poignant symbol of maternal care.” When Mrs. Croft and Mrs. Musgrove speak on the abuse of long engagements, Anne observes that at the distant table “Captain Wentworth's pen ceased to move, his head was raised, pausing, and he turned round the next moment to give look, one quick conscious look at her” (P, p. 231). Again, when Anne Elliot and Captain Harville discuss the constancy of man and woman towards each other, Anny notices that Captain Wentworth's pen falls down from his hand. (P, p. 233). When Elinor learns that Edward Ferrars is not married, she is beside herself with joy.

The upheaval in her heart is suggested in such a small detail :

"Elinor Dashwood could sit no longer. She almost ran out of the room" (SS, p. 360). Marianne Dashwood listens to the praise of Lucy Steele "with only moving from one chair to another (SS, p. 265). This action speaks volumes for her emotional upsurge. Catherine Morland is very sad when Mr. Thorpe does not stop the carriage to meet the Tilneys on the way. This is clear from her behaviour towards Mr. Thorpe: "Catherine's complainance was no longer what it had been in their former airing. She listened reluctantly, and her replies were short" (NA, p. 88).

Jane Austen has rightly compared her art to a miniature painting on ivory, only two inches wide.⁵ In such a painting not only the range is small but the touches are also minute and neat. It is through small details that Jane Austen describes her characters. The raw material used is commonplace and ordinary, and the novelist has remarkable control over her material. Thus to the readers who are often accustomed to reading about big events or great situations in novels she appears to be preoccupied with small and dull things, and to some, "Of all great writers she is most difficult to catch in the act of greatness."⁶

In the eighteenth century good conversation was greatly valued "The art of polite conversation, then, was the special grace of the lady and gentleman."⁷ Jane Austen has great skill in creating interesting conversation. Her mode of study being dramatic, emphasis is on conversation and mental alertness of the heroines. They get a singular animation when they speak, and are at their best while conversing. Fanny Price's voice "was sweet, and when she spoke, her countenance was pretty (MP, p. 12). Elizabeth acquires a new fascination while engaged in conversation. Naturally, Mr. Darcy is attracted by "the pair of her fine eyes." Whereas Mrs. Allen confuses important matters with trivial ones, Catherine Morland is always simple and forthright, in *Persuasion*, Anne Eliot is consistent and firm in her arguments, while Captain Harville fluctuates here and there (PP, p. 234-236). It is mainly because of her stress on conversation in character-study that Jane Austen can do without physical descriptions. As W. A. Craik points out: "Jane Austen has no need to describe physical features ... (as she has) her power of creating conversation."⁸

To evade a direct expression of emotion the Jane Austen heroine takes refuge in reflection and solitude. Even such a quick-witted heroine as Elizabeth Bennet requires time to think of a reply to Mr. Darcy's invitation to dance :

"Oh," said she, "I heard you before but I could not immediately determine what to say in reply." (PP, p. 52)

Whenever emotionally moved, the heroines seek solitude or privacy. When Anne Elliot is emotionally touched, she needs solitude to give vent to her aggravated feelings : "Her spirits wanted the solitude and silence which only numbers could give" (P, p. 89). Sleepless nights are a natural sequel when the heroine is perturbed. Mr. Thorpe does not stop the carriage to meet the Tilneys on the way. Catherine Morland is seriously disturbed. Jane Austen thus dismisses her at the end of the chapter : "And now I may dismiss my heroine to the sleepless couch, which is the true heroine's portion ; to a pillow strewn with thorns and wet with tears. And lucky may she think herself if she gets another good nights rest in the course of the next three months." (NA, p. 90). Elizabeth Bennet's early experiences aggravate her prejudice against Mr. Darcy. She reflects, while all alone, on these incidents. The image created in her mind is strengthened because of her recollections. She leaves reflections for solitary walks and hours ; and gets great relief from reflections. In *Mansfield Park* her East-room is a great comfort for Fanny Price for her recollection and reflection. When carried away by feelings during the Box Hill excursion, Jane Fairfax wants to be all alone : "O Miss Woodhouse, the comfort of being sometimes alone" (E, p. 363). These are her parting words to Emma Woodhouse. When finally proposed to by Mr. Knightley, Emma was emotionally moved. She needed solitude to recollect and adapt herself to the latest development of her love-affair. She is happy to find her conversation with Mr. Knightley interrupted :

"Their conversation was soon afterwards closed by the entrance of her father. She was not sorry. She wanted to be alone. Her mind was in a state of flutter and wonder, which made it impossible for her to be collected." (E, p. 475)

The reflections also serve as soliloquy and provide a psychological insight into the mind of heroines. Elizabeth reads Mr. Darcy's long letter, justifying his past conduct, for the first time—it is a superficial

reading : "He expressed no regret for what he had done which satisfied her ; his style was not penitent, but haughty. It was all pride and insolence." (PP, p. 204). She reflects on it ; now it seems to say more than it did earlier. She reads it again and again, and a different picture of Wickham comes to her mind. She finds herself deceived in him. In the case of Frank Churchill's long letter disclosing his secret engagement with Jane Fairfax, the work of reading and reflection is done simultaneously by Mr. Knightley (E, pp. 444-450). Catherine Morland runs after Miss Tilney to tell her of her being at home. The Thorpes try to stop her : "As she walked, she reflected on what had passed" (NA, p. 102). Her reflections give a clue to the working of her mind.

One cause of this technique is Jane Austen's consciousness of her limitations, of not being a poet. When her heroines are emotionally moved, she takes them to a solitary place of retirement to soothe their agitated hearts. The technique suited her, as she wrote in the midst of noise, the interruption and warning of the "creaking door". By sending her heroines into reflection in isolation or privacy, she could perhaps give up the incident to pick it afresh in the next sitting. It is on account of this mode that heroines remain fresh and charming. They heroines often become rational beings after reflections in privacy ; reason and good sense prevail over emotion. It is then within the novelist's powers to study them. As such, natural spontaneity is the output.

Jane Austen probably got some hints or subjects from male writers like Richardson, Fielding, Swift and Smollett. But it is to women novelists whom she looked most for method or manner. And, while taking a cue from sister-novelists, she excels all in her achievement. Whereas Clara Reeve writes tolerably well in the romantic vein and Maria Edgeworth in the characteristically Irish strain, no woman novelist equals Jane Austen in the portrayal of life-like and living women characters. Miss Maria Edgeworth is too avowedly didactic and Fanny Burney too copious and imitative. In Jane Austen, moral and realistic trends are harmoniously blended. Charlotte Lennox in the *Female Quixote* (1752), brings about the exquisite qualities of Lady Arabella by contrasting her with her spiteful and silly cousin, Miss Glanville. The method is followed by Fanny Burney : she provides striking contrasts to her well-bred

characters. But Jane Austen's art of characterization of women goes much beyond this when she uses the contrastive mode of study.

Jane Austen's whole art of characterization is influenced by her being a woman. A woman portrays women. She is sympathetic in her detailed study of heroines. The development in these characters marks the evolution in her art. In her earlier novels the analysis is not so thorough, but in the later ones, it is deep and penetrating. In *Northanger Abbey*, the heroine is immature. Catherine does some necessary growing up, but because of Jane Austen's intention "to do too much with her," she does not emerge as a living character.

There is a considerable development in characterization in *Sense and Sensibility*. By using her favourite technique of contrast in character and situation, Jane Austen proposes to deepen the complexity of her heroines. The sensible Elinor grows into a sensitive character. The sensitive character, Marianne, progresses towards a tolerably sensible woman. In her study Jane Austen follows the popular trend in the literary history of the time. In the later works, the author's art further matures, as the goal of her heroines is more specific and explicit maturity. In *Sense and Sensibility* it is found that both sense and sensibility singly are not sufficient; neither of them leads the heroines to their destined aim. The later heroines, more occupied with the present, move effectively towards the committed goal. Elizabeth, who combines in her self both sense and sensibility, is an intelligent woman. The formation of her prejudice, its growth and final removal present the psychological study of working her mind.

The moral strain deepens in Jane Austen's outlook in *Mansfield Park*. Fanny acquires confidence and self-knowledge. One manifestation of self-knowledge is the competence to understand others correctly. Fanny's judgement is always right. In *Emma* Jane Austen's art of proving her heroine is at its height. She makes a thorough analysis of Emma Woodhouse. Jane Austen pits Emma, tenderly though, against the social world around her, in order to awaken her to self-knowledge through a series of experiences. *Emma* makes a marked progress: it is a change from ignorance to self-knowledge and perception. In *Persuasion* the novelist depicts a woman of deep affection and sensitivity.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

Abbreviations used :

SS	<i>Sense and Sensibility</i>
PP	<i>Pride and Prejudice</i>
NA	<i>Northanger Abbey</i>
MP	<i>Mansfield Park</i>
P	<i>Persuasion</i>
E.	<i>Emma</i>

1. *The Novel and the Modern World* (London : Univ. of Chicago Press, 1960 8th Imp. 1970), p. 12.
2. "On Sense and Sensibility," in *Jane Austen : A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Ian Watt (New Jersey : Prentice-Hall, 1963), p. p. 51.
3. Jane Austen seems to have taken a cue from Lady Sarah Pennington who remarks in her *An Unfortunate Mother's Advice to her Absent Daughters* (1761) : "It is only from the less conspicuous scenes of life, from the artless tenor of domestic conduct, that the real character can, with any certainty be drawn—these undignified proclaim the man....." (p. 207).
4. "Womanhood in Jane Austen's Novels," in *Novel—A Forum on Fiction*. III, No. 3 (Spring, 1970), 231.
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7. James Sutherland, *A Preface to Eighteenth Century Poetry* (Oxford : OUP, 1948), p. 65.
8. *Jane Austen : Six Novels* (London, 1965), p. 27.

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THE BRONTËS' FIGHT AGAINST 'SEXISM'

P. P. SHARMA

IN the context of the International Women's Year celebrated not long ago the world over, there seems to be a peculiar aptness in recalling to mind the almost heroic effort the three daughters of a clergyman made in a secluded Yorkshire village in the middle of the nineteenth century. Critics and commentators have been endlessly wondering as to how three frail consumptive girls living in a back-water could develop the strikingly emancipated attitude towards sex that characterizes in varying degrees the work of each. To put things in perspective, it would be helpful to see how some of our current notions commonly associated with the feminist movement were distinctly anticipated by the Brontë sisters. In this article, however, will be attempted a more limited task, that of showing that the sisters fought sexism in two different senses: first, the entrenched prejudice against the female sex, and second, "any arbitrary stereotyping of males or females on the basis of gender."¹

The first interesting fact that one encounters in the account of their life from childhood on is the freedom with which they all turned to reading and writing. The massive juvenilia written in such a microscopic hand that scholars can read only with the aid of a magnifying glass is an eloquent testimony to their innate belief that the potential of a woman cannot be used up in mere household chores, that after cooking, scrubbing and sewing are done, she has still a craving left in her for something different. From Mrs. Gaskell's pages one is familiar with the figure of Emily kneading the dough in the Haworth kitchen and reading a book propped against the fender. The sagas and legends in the creation of which they used to be so rapturously absorbed until late into the night, the day's work over, are clearly overlaid by a masculine bias, without any finicking effeminacy of any kind, so much so indeed that even the expert would be hard put to tell Bránwell's hand from his sisters'.

The nom-de-plumes under which their books appeared—Currer, Ellis and Acton for Charlotte, Emily and Anne respectively—were, appropriately enough, androgynous. Only recently has it been realized, and not yet quite realized, that men and women should be treated primarily as people and that no arbitrary assignment of jobs should be done on the basis of sex. For us, it is enough to know about authors and heroes, leaders and explorers, philosophers and pioneers; we have no strong reason to feel inquisitive about their sex. The contemporaries of the Brontës, not so enlightened as they, however, thought differently. No lesser a man than Southey, on being approached by Charlotte for advice, wrote her such a stinker for presuming to trespass into the male territory. "Literature cannot be," pontificated the poet-laureate, "the business of a woman's life, and it ought not to be. The more she is engaged in her proper duties, the less leisure will she have for it, even as an accomplishment and a recreation."³ That admonition, fortunately, did not produce the dampening effect that was intended.

What pandemonium greeted the publication of their works! Here are some choice bouquets which they received: "Love in a kitchen is a favourite subject of the author of *Jane Eyre*."³ G. H. Lewis, in whom she had confided, commented: "The grand function of woman is and must be maternity and this we regard not only as her distinctive characteristic and most enduring charm, but a high and holy office."⁴ (This, by the way, called forth Charlotte's caustic retort: "I can be on my guard against my enemies but God deliver me from my friends."⁵) A biographer in search of material records his impression of the general hostility to them thus: "...if you mentioned the name of the Brontë in an average company the chances were in favour of your being met with an indignant snort from some one who protested that Charlotte's stories were a disgraceful libel upon the district, and that *Wuthering Heights* was a book so dreadful in its character that its author would only have met with her deserts had she been soundly whipped for writing it."⁶ The cause of this animosity was that once their identity was known, people judged them more as women than as writers. Charlotte found it exasperating in the extreme that a literary critic should praise the book if written by a man and pronounce it odious if written by a woman. Her protest has a typically modernist ring in it:

"To such critics I would say, 'To you I am neither man nor woman—I come before you as an author only. It is the sole standard by which you have a right to judge me'" 7.

Even Anne, the youngest and the quietest among them, could not forbear snubbing such critics as used double standards or demonstrated an unhealthy curiosity about the person behind the pen: "As to whether the name be real or fictitious, it cannot greatly signify to those who know him only by his works. As little, I should think, can it matter whether the writer so designated is a man, or a woman... If a book is a good one, it is so whatever the sex of the author may be."⁸ This guessing game of the sex-obsessed critic reached its *reductio ad absurdum* when Emily was supplied with a lover of the name of Louis Parensell, which, curiously enough, turned out to be a misreading of "lover's Farewell", Charlotte's gloss on one of Emily's Poems."⁹

The question one would like to ask here is: Why should the reviewers of the Victorian era cut such fantastic capers? The answer is ready at hand: the Brontës were rebelling against their milieu which was unmistakably male-dominated. What else could it be when the pious gathered in each family every day to sing hymns to inculcate not only humility but also servility in women. Sample this:

Ah, dire effect of female pride :
How deep our mother's sin and wide,
Through all her daughters spread ;
Since first she plucked the mortal tree,
Each woman would a goddess be
In her Creator's stead¹⁰

The Brontës in waging war against this kind of attitude naturally generated a lot of antagonism. They may be regarded as a paradigm in the English novel of those who arrive before their time. True, Blake, Shelley, Byron and other romantic poets had earlier adopted unconventional postures. But the bourgeois world of the novel had very little of the bohemian character about it. Now the Brontës were trying to give it that, with the result that the orthodox were filled with fear and dismay. The Brontës gave a serious jolt to the prevalent beliefs and assumptions among the Victorians as to what is and is not proper for women.

The Brontë heroine is very different from the run-of-the-mill languishing female of the novel. Charlotte deprives her of her traditional share of good looks. She is deliberately made to appear plain, provincial and unprepossessing in order that the conception of a woman as an object of lust, a mere plaything or a sideboard ornament, may be effectively repudiated. None of them is shown like an ivy clinging to an oak, or conforming to the received view of what a girl should be like. For equality in marital relationship, there are few characters in the entire range of fictional literature comparable to Jane Eyre. This frail but indomitable woman first flees from Rochester and later refuses St. John Rivers because both are domineering males and both pose a threat to her identity and integrity. To suggest that Jane decides not to marry Rochester because his first wife is still living sounds much too simple and George Eliot's query as to why a woman, as rebellious as she, should have shown that kind of conservatism, remains unanswered. Although Charlotte causes Jane to attribute her decision to leave Thornfield once and for all to her conscience—perhaps it was a concession she had allowed to current ethical notions—the fact seems to be that Jane cannot reconcile herself to accepting an inferior position in her relationship with the wealthy Rochester. The idea of becoming the successor of the three poor girls with whom he had a liaison earlier is completely repugnant to her. She is convinced that “he would one day regard me with the same feeling which now in his mind desecrated their memory.” The mad woman, therefore, may be regarded as “a projection of Jane.”¹¹ Similarly, although St. John Rivers has certain good qualities, he is, nevertheless, anxious to establish his dominion over her. And to Jane's temperament submission of any sort is utterly foreign. When, finally, she returns to Rochester, it is she, rather than Rochester, who is the giver and protector. There has occurred such a thorough reversal in their fortunes.

Charlotte and Anne do not often typecast their woman characters into traditional occupations or roles. Most of them venture out of home to make a living for themselves. The male ego, covering itself under the facade of solicitude, often tries to keep the women parasites. Charlotte has Crimsworth in *The Professor* say that he would like to act like the providence in respect of his beloved,

feeding her and clothing her, as "God does the lilies of the field."¹² The greatest ambition of Francis and of Lucy Snowe in *Villette* is to be installed in a seminary of their own. In like fashion, Agnes Grey, too, refuses to surrender her independence and keeps working under the most disheartening conditions. Helen in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* will not keep her neck perennially bent in servitude to her depraved husband and will manage, as best she can, on her own.

There is no reason why certain characteristics like boldness, initiative, and assertiveness should not be praised in females and conversely qualities like gentleness, compassion, and sensitivity should not be praised in males. In fact this is what the authors are supposed to do to ensure equal treatment of the sexes.¹³ The Brontë hero is not all male any more than the Brontë heroine is all female. In *Shirley* this point becomes so apparent. The heroine is portrayed as handling successfully and competently a very strenuous man-size job. Louis Moore, on the other hand, is obviously gifted with the sensibility and sensitivity of a woman, as is shown by his emotional outpourings in his diary. In contrast with them, we have Robert and Caroline Helstone neither of whom is a "sympathetic" character. In both, Charlotte seems to be caricaturing the rigidly drawn stereotypes of man and woman. She does not support that certain jobs are compatible with masculinity, others with femininity.

If one at all wished to talk of the difference between male and female in connection with *Wuthering Heights*, it could only be relevant to two groups of people: the Earnshaws and the Lyntons. These groups, as David Cecil has pointed out, respectively represent the principle of storm and the principle of calm.¹⁴ The glory and the power of this novel is that it will for ever defy any single interpretation. However, what Emily does towards the end seems to be significant. Cathy manages to raise the uncouth and unlettered Hareton to her own level by a show of stern authority proper to an instructor. If Hareton makes a mistake he has been warned against earlier, Cathy threatens to pull his hair. Or, if his eyes impatiently wander from the page, they are recalled by a smart slap on the cheek. Surely, the war against the stereotypes based on sex has been carried to a point far and away from the Victorian's imagination.

The Brontës, it is only fair to concede, are not all of a piece. They were not doctrinaire and so, naturally, one discovers several

inconsistencies (so much so, indeed, that one can make out a case for "door-mat heroines" in their works). But for their time, they had an astonishingly daring vision. Remember, the suffragist movement had not yet begun then and Gladstone had expressed his fear that the ballot box "would trespass upon their delicacy, their purity, their refinement, the elevation of their whole nature."¹⁵ A critic, therefore, is not exaggerating when he sums up their achievement in these words: "The voice of free and insurgent woman first comes clearly into modern literature out of the Haworth parsonage."¹⁶

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4. Augustine Birrell, *Charlotte Brontë* (London, 1887), p. 130.
5. T. J. Wise and J. A. Symington, *The Brontës: Their Lives, Friendships and Correspondence* (London, 1932), III, 67.
6. "The Memoirs of Sir Wemmyes Reid," *Bronte Society Transactions* (1947), p. 82.
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11. Martin S. Day, "Central Concepts of *Jane Eyre*," *The Personalist*, 41, no. 4 (1960), p. 503.
12. Charlotte Brontë, *The Professor* (The Nelson Classics), p. 214.
13. See excerpts from "Guidelines for Equal Treatment of the Sexes" issued by McGraw-Hill Book company in the *Span* article referred to above.
14. David Cecil, "Emily Brontë and 'Wuthering Heights'" in *Early Victorian Novelists* (London, 1894), p. 119.
15. Viola Klein, "The Emancipation of Women: Its Motives and Achievements" in *Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians* (London, 1949), p. 267.
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TONE AND MEANING IN *THE MAYOR OF CASTERBRIDGE*

AMITABHA SINHA

I

THIS essay has a threefold intention.* It seeks to consider several not-so-well explored features of the technique of *The Mayor Of Casterbridge* (1886), one of the significant points in the development of late-Victorian fiction. Thereby it aims at refreshing the understanding that we already have of the novel. In the same process it also tries to suggest that the indisputably central tone of tragic intensity is modified by and in its turn modifies an opposed tone as the story moves on.

II

First, I would consider the novel's first chapter which stands as a self-contained narrative unit and microcosmically reflects the meaning of the total work. For one thing, the chapter, along with the second chapter, marks the opening of the novel as a remarkable feature of its art—the kind of *explosive* opening that blazes its trail after an implicit passage of time (eighteen years here) in the rest of the narrative; that is the opening we see, for instance, in the first chapter of George Eliot's *Silas Marner* (1861) and in the more striking first chapter of George Meredith's *Harry Richmond* (1871). I shall, however, concentrate on the *inner* organization of the chapter, which reveals the tone of tragic intensity at its deepest in the novel (the note of hope in the second chapter is only an ironic preparation for the tragic mood of chapters 3-45).

The chapter opens with a freely omniscient, panoramic point of view, following the device of what is called *panning* in film-terminology—the long-distance view that by and by “closes up” on things and people. It would be as well to quote the opening lines :

* The essay is based on a series of lectures given at the Summer Institute, 1980, organized by the Department of English, Calcutta University.

One evening of late summer, before the nineteenth century had reached one-third of its span, a young man and woman, the latter carrying a child, were approaching the large village of Weydon-Priors, in Upper Wessex, on foot.¹

The phrase, "before the nineteenth century etc.", gives the unmistakably panoramic sense of long distance in time, supported by the reminiscential "one evening"²: the word "century" is significant, too, in this respect, and it shortly reappears in "centuries untold" in the description of the weak bird (p. 37)—Hardy seems to be thinking in terms of nothing short of the century as the time-unit of existence. It is relevant to note here that the phrase "nineteenth century" in the 1912 revision increases this effect from an extraneous angle, so that the twentieth-century reader is doubly alerted to the long-distant view, although the pre-1912 text, "before the *present* century reached its thirtieth year"³, better emphasizes the panoramic sense through the ruminative touch it gives to the narration.

What gives the greatest effect to this "panning" device is, however, the use of anonymity—in this and the following chapter—in the third-person references to the characters: one does not even know the name Henchard till he takes his oath in the second chapter (p. 49). Throughout the first chapter—as for instance in the first six paragraphs—we see "a young man and woman"; "the man"; "this couple's progress"; "the young woman's face"; "the man and woman"; "the wife"; and so forth; sometimes, for a better "close-up", the description becomes "trusser" or "hay-trusser", but nothing beyond. This use of anonymity reaches its height in the second paragraph, in the use not even of nominatives but of the third-person singular "he" and its derivatives like "his" and "him"—eight times in the four sentences of the paragraph—in the references to Henchard, the focal point in the paragraph. The device of anonymity surely gives a sense of distance in space—the "man" and the "woman" look like figures seen through a field-glass—which parallels as well as supports the sense of distance in time. What is also important, it generalizes, universalizes, even allegorizes the human predicament: the impression given by the iterative "man and woman" (along with the child) is that of the archetypal human family. A further, imagistic effect of the temporal-spatial distance, and even of timelessness, along with the Biblical idea of death is achieved

by the word "dust". The Henchards' garments are covered in the first paragraph by a "*hoar* of dust" (p. 35 ; my italic) which is echoed by the dust that powders the road and the boughs "as it lay... deadening all sounds" (p. 36) ; this performs a premonitory structural function, too, for, in chapter 3, Susan and Elizabeth-Jane arrive after eighteen years in Weydon-Priors, "again carpeted with dust" (p. 51).

Other images and evocative words begin to germinate from the end of the first movement of the action in the chapter—the Henchards' arrival—, grow through the second and central movement—the wife-sale—, and sometimes extend even beyond it. Thus, the indefinite article *a* buttresses the sense of loneliness, which is also an aspect of the novel's theme, in the descriptions of birds and animals : "*a* weak bird" sings (p. 37) ; the auctioneer announces "*a* very promising brood-mare" (p. 40) ; "*a* swallow" flies (p. 41) ; in chapter 2, "*a single* big blue fly buzzed" when Henchard wakes up (p. 47) ; "*a little dog*" is the only spectator of Henchard's departure (p. 48 ; italics all mine). Further, birds and animals constitute two image-patterns. The "bird" indeed functions almost as a symbol of Susan, and its centre is the image of Susan's pleadings with the intoxicated Henchard, "those bird-like chirpings" (p. 39), which brings out the woman's frailty ; in this light, the singing "weak bird" (p. 37) becomes the weak Susan's analogue, and the lonely swallow flies away from the tent it had blundered into, "made its escape" (p. 41), which is exactly what Susan, too, does. Susan is equated also with the "horse" (although the analogy is somewhat watered down by Henchard's awareness of it and by Hardy's intrusive commentary) : the brood-mare is to be sold by an auctioneer the same as Susan will be by another, self-styled auctioneer (pp. 41-3), and the "several horses...rubbing each other *lovingly* as they waited for their *homeward* journey" (p. 45 ; my italics) ironically contrast with Susan who goes on a journey away from both love and home. The furmity-woman is described in a different kind of image, in terms of the words "haggish" and "hag" (pp. 38-9) which, likening her to a witch, suggest the sense of evil in the episode, and foreshadow the almost supernaturally evil function performed by her (chapter 28) which partly leads to Henchard's tragedy.

Irony, narrative as well as structural, marks the central event in the chapter. Henchard's words to the turnip-hoer, "Any trade

doing here ?" (p. 37) ironically foreshadow this episode : trade is what he is looking for ; trade is done by the furmity-woman ; the climactic trade done is the sale of the wife ; incidentally, this, in its turn, prefaces the corn-trade which is the backdrop to the bulk of the story. What is also ironical is the sudden arrival of the bidder, Newson, who in an airy response to Henchard's "challenge" (p. 43) takes Susan and the child away. This sets the key-pattern in Henchard's life : the unknown man's visit that leads to important developments. Thus, Farfrae will similarly take up Henchard's unintended challenge about corn (chs. 4-5), becoming Newson's double in the following train of events. The second appearance of Newson at the end of the novel repeats the pattern as he takes Elizabeth-Jane away from Henchard.

The final movement in the chapter is the desolate aftermath of the wife-sale. It is the last point in the development of the dominating mood of the chapter, which I would call "the sense of an ending", arrived at from the very opening through a series of iterative images and words. The "one *evening*" and the "*late summer*" in the first paragraph (p. 35 ; my italics here and in the following quotations) set the tone ; the other "evening" in the "trite evening song" of the weak bird "at *sunset*" (p. 38) and the "*expiring* sunlight" further intensify this mood, and so does the swallow, "the *last* of the season" (p. 41) ; after the sale and the departure of Susan, Henchard and the others stand "looking into the *twilight*" (p. 44) ; finally, the exhausted Henchard falls fast asleep, all alone, in the tent of the furmity-woman who drives away after "*extinguishing* the *last* lamp" (p. 46). Thus the words and the images build up an imaginative analogy of Henchard's tragic loneliness in this chapter, which in its turn is echoed by his lonely, exhausted death in the end of the novel.

In all this—the sense of timelessness ; the sense of loneliness ; the sense of evil ; the sense of an ending—the first chapter surely functions as the microcosmic image of the whole narrative which illustrates these preoccupations. Yet, another, opposed tone, too, germinates in the chapter. The sale of Susan—a harrowing experience as it has been for her—is not after all altogether tragic for the gay, generous sailor Newson is *not* a bad man at all (Newson as a villain would have made Susan really tragic) ; further, the subsequent

narration tells us that she had on the whole not been unhappy with him (e.g. p. 56) till her understanding of the meaning of their relationship. Susan's journey, therefore, indicates a sense of release, which even the *bird*-symbolism points to: the swallow "made its *escape*" (my italic). There is yet another way in which this other tone emphasizes itself in the chapter, but I shall deal with that at the end of the essay.

III

Several objects and words emerge out of the dense localization of *place* and atmosphere in this novel—the fair, the Roman Amphitheatre, the streets, the market-scenes, and so forth—to make patterns in a way which illuminate the novel's theme. Of these, I shall treat the two that I find most relevant.

Firstly, the "church" which frequently appears in the narrative with the usual meanings associated with the idea of a church: the place of worship and God; the graveyard, therefore death; the place of social assembly. In these terms, it is possible to metaphorically trace the developments in Henchard's fortunes, with whom it is chiefly linked, but other significances, too, accrue to it.

It appears for the first time in chapter 2, when Henchard takes his oath in the church a few miles away from Weydon-Priors. The "tower" of the church, seen by him, suggests a spiritual stronghold, and the "sense of strangeness" that he feels inside the church—the interior is described at some length—as well as the "big book" obviously suggest faith (pp. 49-50). This characterizes Henchard by bringing out his religiosity as well as the superstitious streak in his mind (Hardy refers to his "fetichism", p. 49); at the same time, this motivates the structure of the novel as the metaphorical starting-point of his rise to mayoralty.

The second occurrence is of the church at Casterbridge, after Henchard has flourished there. This is when Susan and Elizabeth-Jane arrive there after eighteen years, near "a grizzled church, whose massive, square tower rose unbroken into the darkening sky...the mortar from the joints of the stonework...nibbled out by time and weather..." (p. 61). The sense of a timeless, old world is associated with the church here—as indeed with the Amphitheatre and the heath—through the words "grizzled" and "massive" and in the fact that the ancient curfew "still" tolls there (*ibid.*), a world that defies

although is damaged by time. As in the previous instance, we see the "tower" again, as the symbol of a steady ideal, the epitome of this world. In terms of the proximity with Henchard's name immediately after (pp. 61-2) and also of the earlier instance, the "church" becomes implicitly linked with Henchard and his fortunes.

The next few appearances of the metaphor coincide with another important event in Henchard's life—the arrival of Lucetta—during her three meetings with Elizabeth-Jane in the churchyard of Casterbridge (chs. 20 and 21). The churchyard exudes the sense of death and mutability, firstly because both women have gone to Susan's grave there (pp. 161-62). The intriguing thing, however, is Lucetta's first appearance in the novel in the churchyard (*ibid.*). The idea of something diabolical—be it ever so slight—is associated with Lucetta at that place, who will bring about the quadrangular intricacies: the "solitary dark figure" in the churchyard, at whose presence Elizabeth-Jane feels a "supernatural sense of evil" (p. 171). Lucetta is ironically linked also with death in "churchyard" terms when we look at her first appearance at that place with the hindsight gained from the image of her death after twenty chapters, "Lucetta had been borne along the *churchyard path*" (p. 322; my italics). Then, a very different significance gathers to the Casterbridge church in some of its descriptions given during the last of these visits of the two women: "a churchyard as old as civilization" and on the "summit [of the tower] the rope of a flag-staff rattled in the wind" (p. 171); again, "...the church-tower behind, where the smacking of the rope against the flag-staff still went on" (p. 172). The idea suggested is interesting: the tower, the ideal, is "rattled" by the malevolent force of nature, which corresponds with the upheavals that begin to rock Henchard and Casterbridge from now on.

There is a progressive inversion of the idea of the "church" in the following series in the pattern. Firstly, Henchard, after his downfall, sadly stands on a bridge one windy afternoon and "the church-clock struck five" (ch. 32; p. 248). This is the Durnover church which, unlike the Casterbridge one, seems to be in league with the winds ("while the gusts were bringing the notes to his ears", *ibid.*) and is "on the *chilly edge* of the town" (*ibid.* my italics); thereby it suggests Henchard's melancholy mood, and is indeed immediately followed by the information of his total rout (*ibid.*).

Secondly, as Henchard—in the next chapter—forces the church-choir to sing a bitter psalm to take psychological revenge upon Farfrae (pp. 255-59), we have the sense of the “church” being twisted into its opposite, anti-Christian significance, which leads to the impression that Henchard has, so to say, gone over to the devil’s party (significantly, the twenty years’ vow made at the Weydon church ends in the previous chapter—32). Thirdly, an interesting image appears in the description of the inn at Mixen Lane after two chapters, in which the evil “skimmity-ride” brews to demolish Lucetta: “the inn called Peter’s Finger was the *church* of Mixen Lane” (p. 279; my italic); this place is in Durnover, the “chilly” parish of the previous instance. The image obviously takes all the sublimity away from the “church”—the name “Peter” imparts an extra irony to it—and its inversion is total, in keeping with the sordid events which take place.

The “church” has an ironical function in the context of the slight beginning of hope in Henchard’s life when he lives with Elizabeth-Jane once more, in “the shop overlooking the church-yard” (chapter 42; p. 323); that hope goes soon with the second arrival of Newson and it is in this light that the end of the pattern has to be understood.

That end is in the last chapter (45), which coincides with Henchard’s end. There is a total separation of the “church” now from Henchard’s life, that takes place in the “will” written by him in the final mood of terribly aggrieved self-laceration:

...I be not bury’d in *consecrated ground*.
& that no *sexton* be asked to *toll the bells*...

.....

... ..

& that no *mourners walk behind* me at my funeral.
& that no *flowers* be planted on my grave ...

(p. 353; my italics)

This deliberate dissociation of himself from the church by rejecting all the paraphernalia of a church funeral of course signifies the negation of faith and even of the sanctity of death, and it also signifies the sheer loneliness of the man. It is logically Egdon Heath where this emotional disjunction as well as the death takes place, where there is and can be no church at all.

Yet, an interesting instance of the "church" near the end of the novel, to which the above is juxtaposed, dislocates the entire series by intensifying the separate significance of the Casterbridge church. That is when, on his way to Elizabeth-Jane's and Farfrae's wedding, Henchard hears the wedding bells—"the incident of the deepest interest on the journey being the soft pealing of the *Casterbridge bells...*" (ch. 44 ; p. 343 ; my italics). The "soft pealing" indicates that this church has not obliterated itself unlike the Weydon church or the idea of "church" in Henchard's mind. It indicates that the grizzled, massive Casterbridge church is still there, having defied the rattling winds and celebrated faith in life and humanity. While, by way of contrast, it surely gives poignancy to Henchard's tragedy, it also imparts a touch of festive comedy to the tone of the novel.

Secondly, the pattern made of the word "gay" along with its derivatives functions, quite paradoxically in the tragic framework, as an undercurrent in the story. Three different meanings, (a) light-heartedness, (b) frivolity, and (c) love of pleasure along with moral laxity, gather to it.

It would be as well to begin with a very small instance from the description of the Roman Amphitheatre where Susan and Henchard go to see each other after eighteen years in chapter 11 : even the effort of some boys "to impart gaiety to the ruin usually languished" (p. 101). The word "gaiety" deepens through contrast the nature of the "melancholy, impressive, lonely" Amphitheatre (*ibid.*) which is the image of the gloomy world of Henchard (each of these three words is equally true of him).

The word is, however, very suggestively linked with Elizabeth-Jane, the only thoughtful, almost philosophical character in the story. The first time the word appears is when, listening to the rustics' jokes in *The Three Mariners*, she reflects that although "one could be gay on occasion, moments of gaiety were interludes" (chapter 8 ; p. 85) ; after some time, when she and Susan begin to live an affluent life after the latter's second marriage with Henchard, she tells herself, "I won't be gay...it would be tempting Providence to hurl mother and me down...". Thus Elizabeth-Jane's attitude to gaiety is reserved and reminds us of the Old Testament; making it out as something frivolous, and, through the image "hurl down", even as something

devilish. The same reserved attitude is seen in the next chapter, and in the same context, when a narrative commentary tells us that she did not illustrate "the prophet Baruch's sly definition: 'the virgin that goeth gay'" (p. 125) in which the Old Testament idea surfaces again to interpret gaiety as flirtatiousness; further, she has her "curious resolves on checking gay fancies in the matter of clothes" (*ibid.*), which indicates her spirit of self-denial. While Elizabeth-Jane's metonymical yet paradoxical link with gaiety repeats itself in her words that her history is "not gay or attractive" (ch. 20; p. 164-65), the word achieves implicit structural irony in the narrator's commentary when she goes to accept Lucetta's offer, "Elizabeth-Jane, having now changed her orbit from one of gay independence to laborious self-help..." (ch. 21; p. 170); however reserved, the gaiety is no longer Elizabeth-Jane's but Lucetta's, who will now begin to dominate the story till her death in chapter 40.

Lucetta, the foil to Elizabeth-Jane, is truly gay—in the sense of pleasure-hunting and flirtatiousness. On the occasion of the horse-drill episode, she "gaily" tells Farfrae not to forsake the machine for her (ch. 24; p. 160), so that the word obviously suggests coquetry. When again, Henchard overhears Farfrae's and Lucetta's conversation during their tryst, Lucetta "gaily" asks Farfrae to speak out whatever he likes, the significance being much the same as before. On a later occasion, Henchard's sarcastic remark to her unconsciously typifies her, "...we of the lower classes know nothing of the gay leisure such as you enjoy" (ch. 33; p. 260); while Henchard aptly means "cheerful affluence" by the phrase, it is ironically true of Lucetta's character in the sense we have understood above. The word has a further resonance during the visit of the royal personage (ch. 37); Henchard "elbowed his way through the gay throng" (p. 287), and immediately after that, while he stands near the crowd in his shabby dress, Lucetta's eyes "slid over him ... as gaily dressed women's eyes will too often do on such occasions" (p. 251). The crowd is gay, that is cheerful; Lucetta is gaily, that is colourfully, dressed; what matters is Henchard's isolation from gaiety—he goes past the gay crowd while the gay Lucetta's eyes go past him; the irony is complete.

There is a crowded frequency of the word in the last two chapters—four times in six pages—indicating the festive mood of Farfrae's

and Elizabeth-Jane's wedding, but linked also with Henchard. On his way to the wedding, he decides at first "to intrude as little of his personality as possible upon a gay event" (ch. 44 ; p. 342) ; while this brings out the lonely Henchard's effort to accommodate himself to the festive mood, his character sharply stands out when "the gaiety [of the dance] jarred upon Henchard's spirits" (p. 345). The focus then moves on to Elizabeth-Jane on whose face the expression is "one of nervous pleasure rather than of gaiety" (*ibid.*), the distinction between "nervous pleasure" and "gaiety" indicating the best that the reserved Elizabeth-Jane can do to reconcile herself to the festive mood. The word appears for the last time, in the last chapter, in connexion with Newson "whose gaiety was of his own making" (p. 348) and who, as we know, has been the gayest person at the wedding. We are told that Newson goes away from Casterbridge very soon, and it is extremely significant that, with the gay Newson's departure (*ibid.*) the word "gay", too, disappears from the novel. For, what is left now is the stark, bleak, death-haunted world of Henchard in Egdon Heath where gaiety of no sort is possible.

One character, Farfrae—who is indeed a gay person—tends, however, to give another meaning to the pattern. If the pattern ends with Henchard's death, it nearly comes to its end in Farfrae's gay wedding, too, in chapter 44 and the juxtaposition is the same as in the "church"-pattern. It is Elizabeth-Jane, married to Farfrae, who strikes some balance between the two tones with her "nervous pleasure" ; it is nevertheless "pleasure" still, although it is able to weep over the sad end of Henchard later on. This leads to the conclusion I tentatively suggest now.

IV

Three passages in the novel tend to illustrate the theme Hardy has in his mind. I would first quote them.

(1) The longish descriptive commentary after the wife-sale :

He rose and walked to the entrance....Some others followed and they stood looking into the twilight. The difference between the *peacefulness of inferior nature and the wilful hostilities of mankind* was very apparent....Outside the fair, in the valleys and woods, all was *quiet*. The sun had recently set and the west heaven was *hung with rosy cloud*....To watch it was like looking at some grand feat of stagery from a darkened auditorium. In presence of

this scene, after the other, there *was a natural instinct* to abjure man as the blot' on an otherwise kindly universe; *till it was remembered that all terrestrial conditions* were intermittent, and that mankind might some night be innocently sleeping when these *quiet objects were raging loud*.

(ch. 1 ; p. 46 ; my italics)

(2) Elizabeth-Jane's responses on the occasion of Farfrae's ballad-singing :

She disliked those wretched humours of Christopher Coney and his tribe.... He (Farfrae) seemed to feel exactly as she about life and its surroundings—that they were *a tragical, rather than a comical, thing* : that though one could be gay on *occasion*, moments of gaiety *were interludes* and no part of the actual drama....

(ch. 8 ; pp. 85-6 ; my italics)

(3) The familiar, final lines in the novel—Elizabeth-Jane's musing :

...She did not cease to wonder at the persistence of the unforeseen, when the one to whom such unbroken tranquillity had been accorded in the adult stage was she whose youth had seemed to teach that *happiness was but the occasional episode in a general drama of pain*.

(ch. 45 ; p. 354 ; my italics)

The passages share with one another the idea of life as a sad phenomenon in which joy is intermittent, given effect to by such words as "intermittent", "interludes", "occasion", and "occasional". Let us, however, separately analyze them.

The first passage arrives at its conclusion through a set of paradox and antithesis. The *peacefulness* of nature—supported by the repetition of "quiet"—and mankind's "wilful hostilities" balance one another, and the antithesis seems to indict mankind in a fit of Rousseauistic imagination, further endorsed by the beauty of the sunset and the phrase "natural instinct". This idea is reduced by the paradox of "all terrestrial conditions etc.", supported by the other paradox "quiet objects...raging". The important thing, however, is the narrative point of view, for the crux of the matter is in "till it was remembered". The point is, who remembered it? The words, "apparent", "watched", "looking", do indicate the effective presence of the assembled observers; but granted the traditional rustic tendency towards philosophisation, the metaphysical idea here is surely beyond them. The omniscient narrator cannot be the source of the idea, either, since, axiomatically, he cannot be present

in the scene. The fact is that the point of view partakes, of the features of an ideal, non-existent observer. This is because the nature-description is so devoted that the conclusion does not fully succeed in wrenching us out of the illusion as it intends to do, and therefore the omniscient narrator cannot take full responsibility for the idea propounded. The result is a certain ambiguity in the narrative representation of the theme.

In the second passage, the idea of intermittent joy is definitely not presented from the omniscient point of view but from that of Elizabeth-Jane. Once again, we find an unintended ambiguity. While Elizabeth-Jane frowns upon the 'moments of gaiety' because of the rustics' unwholesome jokes and actually uses the word "occasion", the gaiety of the actual *occasion* when she thus ruminates is that of Farfrae's singing. Elizabeth-Jane therefore confuses the two kinds of mirthfulness, the unwholesome and the innocent, so that it is not easy to accept that Hardy, who seems to agree with her, is sure of his theme.

In the last lines, too, the point of view is Elizabeth-Jane's. They surely have the touch of great writing, for example, in the synecdochic pattern of "drama"- "episode" supporting the antithesis in "general"- "occasional" and "happiness"- "pain". All the same, there is an ambiguity here, too. The intriguing thing is the use of the two articles, *the* and *a*, which, if transposed, would perhaps have better carried the point ("an occasional episode in the general drama of pain"). As it stands, the metaphor "a general drama of pain" individualizes rather than generalizes life; the logical conclusion is that other kinds of drama, too, are possible. Then "*the* occasional episode" implies the inevitability of happy episodes, which surely Hardy did not intend. The line therefore is true of Henchard, but not of life in general.

The lines, however, ironically reflect what the novel itself illustrates. While Henchard's is one drama, Farfrae's is the other. I suggest that the simultaneity of these two strands in the story, the deliberately tragic— the more important one—and the comic, which exerts an unconscious pressure on the other, determines the ambiguity in the novel's tone, that illustrates itself in the double ending and in the spatial patterns, and is incipient even in the first chapter.

V

The reason for this ambiguity can perhaps only be guessed. It may be that Hardy was fumbling towards a final tragic view. The greater likelihood, to my mind, is that it reflects part of the fictional mood in and around the eighteen-eighties, the part that led, for instance, to the double ending—in which, too, wedding bells and tragedy co-exist—of Sabine Baring-Gould's *Mehalah* (1880) or to the schizoid fantasy in Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886). The fact remains, however, that, a great writer as Hardy undoubtedly is, he would have to be a somewhat different, deliberate kind of novelist to fully dramatize such a slightly off-beat tone as we see in this novel.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, New Wessex Edition (London : Macmillan), 1974, reprinted 1975, p. 35. The subsequent page-references are to this edition, unless otherwise mentioned.
2. I find that Ian Gregor in his introduction to the New Wessex edition (*ibid.*, p. 14) and Norman Page in *Thomas Hardy* (London, 1977), p. 78, have briefly touched on these points. The following analysis of the chapter, however, is entirely my own.
3. The Modern Library edition of *The Mayor Casterbridge* (New York : Boni and Liveright), 1917, p. 1, my italic; the date of this edition obviously suggests the 1895 text, although it does not (as it might have) follow the 1912 revision.

BEACONLIGHT TO THE MODERN POET

CHITTARANJAN KUITI

THE modern literary talent is at the cross-roads of varied spheres of knowledge. Scientific development, industrial growth, political controversy, and, above all, material prosperity lead to uncertain but fluid situations of life. In this age intellect steals the limelight while deeper issues of life are relegated to the background, and as such a certain spiritual sterility characterises today's mode of living. The situation is not congenial for healthy literary accomplishments. At this critical juncture the modern poet looks for some one who would be his friend, philosopher and guide. And he does find him out, and this much looked-for man is John Donne, an over-shadowing personality in the sphere of metaphysical poetry in the seventeenth century, a revolting child of the Renaissance, and undeniably beaconlight to the modern poet, or even more so, he is like the lodestar to the out-witted mariners in the deep, dark sea of modern English poetry. An attempt has been made here to present John Donne in a new perspective. It is a subject which links a seventeenth-century poet with a few representative poets of the modern age, and our principal concern here is to highlight some broad features inherent in the poems of Donne and a few British poets of to-day. It would be pertinent for us to attempt first a synoptic survey, an epitomised study of the poems of Donne pointing out therein their salient features, their distinguishing characteristics, and then relate them to some analogous trends and tendencies as evident in the poetry of today especially in the poetry of Yeats, Eliot and Hopkins.

With the general students of letters Donne is not so much a popular name, not so much a literary celebrity as Wordsworth, Keats, Tennyson and Browning, and, as a matter of fact, most of them find his poems elusive in character and consider it worthwhile to by-pass them. But to us he appears to be the most arresting of the seventeenth century poets barring, of course, Milton. But while

such poets as Sidney, Spenser and Milton follow some distinctive tradition, Donne does not. Even in the good old seventeenth century his poems are the outcome of a profoundly personal response to things, the offspring of an intensely vigorous mind. John Donne has been called a metaphysical poet. And at the mention of the very word 'metaphysical' any student of philosophy may feel inclined to pose some questions on metaphysics. But he would be frustrated there, for Donne has very little of metaphysics in his poems. Indeed Dryden makes the observation 'He affects the metaphysics', and thereby gives a kind of nick-name to this school of poetry although some of the poems of Marvell, Vaughan and Crashaw strike occasional metaphysical notes dealing with the marvels of space and the mysteries about soul. Nevertheless, Donne is a metaphysical poet not because of the subjects he deals with but because of obscurity and subtlety involved in technical devices like wit, conceit, and epigram often employed in his poems. It is, of course, immediately difficult for the ordinary reader to break through the fortification of such technical devices, but when he succeeds once in breaking through them in deciphering the meaning embedded therein, the result is irresistible charm. He is enthralled by a new approach which amuses and entertains, and at the same time opens up a new horizon with a pleasant surprise. Expressions like 'love is a spider which transubstantiates all', the flea that sucks the blood of both the lover and the lady-love is their bridal bed, the sick body is a map, the physicians as cosmographers, and Death as south-west discoveries are conceits emphasising an intellectual quality and such imageries are widespread in the erotic and religious poems of Donne and they serve as indispensable tissues of Donne's poetical organism. By means of them Donne lends to his poems a new significance, a new character hitherto unnoticed in English poetry.

Donne's poems have been broadly divided into three categories, i.e. erotic poems, holy sonnets and satires. The first two categories of poems as mentioned above have been critically discussed here. Love in Donne does not run in straight line ; it is not the courtly, chivalrous love of the Middle Ages, not the romantic love of the Elizabethan era, nor that exciting game of the Restoration period, nor that Shavian life force working through man and woman for a well-meaning social purpose, but it is love treated in its varied aspects,

emerging out of a profoundly personal but sensuous response to the relationship between man and woman. What strikes us is the wide range of interests we discover in Donne's treatment of love as is also evident in Browning more than two centuries later. We also cannot rule out the metaphysical interpretation of love in Donne's scheme of things. Love, he experiences, lies in the union of two souls; it is the discovery of one's own self in the other that engenders love. Again, it is never an isolated experience detached from physical charms. So there should be no question of confusion when we find Donne celebrating the immortality of love in 'The Good Morrow'

If our two loves be one, or thou and I
Love so alike, that none do slacken, none can die,

and again in 'The Anniversarie'

All other things to their destruction draw,
Only our love hath no decay,

and yet again belittling it in 'Loves Alchymie' as 'tis imposture all'. Donne is like a wanton lover knowing no constancy. Now like a feverish youngman he runs riot in sensuality, and the next moment like a lover in frustration he broods over the sublimity of love. However, never before in English Literature has voluptuousness been betrayed with such startling frankness as when he addresses his beloved in 'Elegy : Going to Bed',

Full nakedness ! All joyes are due to thee,
As souls unbodied, bodies uncloth'd must be,
To taste whole joyes.

Besides, the quick shifts of moods, the swift vicissitudes of feelings as evident in the dramatic turns of expressions in 'The Apparition'

What I will say, I will not tell thee now

and in 'The Canonization'

For God's sake hold your tongue, and let me love

and again the dignity and majesty of love leading to a note of exaltation in 'The Sunne Rising'

I could eclipse and cloud them (the sunbeams) with a wink,
But that I would not lose her sight so long,

and, yet again, the metaphysical interpretation of love in 'A Valediction : Forbidding Mourning' :

Moving of the earth brings harms and feares,
Men reckon what it did and meant,
But trepidation of the spheares,
Though greater farre, is innocent.

Dull sublunary lovers love
(Whose soule is sense) cannot admit
Absence, because it doth remove
Those things which elemented it,

indicate an intensely agile and tremendously vigorous mind reacting to varied aspects of love. Donne ventures to preach that out of the profound experience of the physical emerges the metaphysical. He maintains in 'The Good-Morrow' that 'one little room' can be made 'an every where' when we proceed from the intimate perception of the immediate things of life to the knowledge of what is ultimate, transcendental, and eternal. It is through the alchemy of love that the microcosm of man can be enormously enlarged into the macrocosm. This is how Donne proceeds from equivocation to sincerity, from jest to earnest, and from the commonplace to the sublime. It is perhaps for this wide range and variety of interests that such modern poets as Eliot, Yeats, and Hopkins feel attracted towards him.

Religion, like love, receives a bold but novel treatment in Donne's holy sonnets. Sonnets are usually love poems but Donne has exploited this literary medium to incorporate his responses to Christianity, and thereby breaks a new ground in this sphere of creative art. However, Donne's religious poems enshrine soul's religious experiences passing through doubts and disbeliefs, depressions and despairs. A consciousness peculiar to Donne of guilt and sin finds a telling expression in the holy sonnets where fear of death haunts his mind more often than not, 'whose feare already shakes my every joynt' (Sonnet 3). Nevertheless, he is not divorced from hope for this sense of contamination, but nurses a desperate hope of restoration. This foreshadows Eliot of 'Ash-Wednesday'. Repentance and contrition, Donne believes, will purge him of baser feelings, it will bring about redemption of his 'darke soul'. In sonnet 3 he voices forth,

Imput me righteous, thus purged of evil,
and in sonnet 2 he reiterates

Or wash thee in Christ's blood, which hath this might
That being red, it dyes red soules to white

and, again, in sonnet 6 he sends out a brave challenge to Death,

One short sleeps past, wee wake eternally,
And Death shall be no more, Death thou shalt die.

Eliot echoes the same feelings as ventilated in Donne's sonnet 6 towards the closing part of 'The Hippopotamus' and uses almost the same phrases. Nevertheless, we can safely assert that in Donne we have a bold acceptance of life. His poems breathe a startling sense of vigour. In Donne and Eliot there is no suggestion of meek surrender to the will of God as in Dante, 'Ela sua volontate e' nostra pace' [In His will is our peace], but there is the suggestion of enduring, as in Shakespeare, whatever may befall our lot; there is no thrashing and thinning of human values before frailty and futility of the order of existence. There is no 'Nay' to life, but 'Yea' to life, a strong affirmation of human values; there is the suggestion of both death and rebirth in the Christian sense.

Moreover, Donne's satires, songs and sonnets, and elegies strike a note of novelty in so far as they do not observe conventional poetic rhythm. Donne revolted against regular metres and monotonous and harmonious cadences. Ben Jonson, his admirer, remarks that Donne deserves hanging for not keeping of accent. But thereby Donne subordinates melody to meaning, and makes unsparing use of the expressive spoken tongue. He introduces into rhymed verse such bold innovations as were customary in the blank verse of the dramatists. In order to substantiate the aforesaid point of view an instance may be cited from 'The Dreame',

When thou knew'st what I dreamt, when thou knew'st when—

In the matter of innovation in rhythm Donne perhaps anticipates Hopkins a few centuries later. Alice Meynell observes that Donne is a poet of fine onsets. Some of his poems open with dramatic abruptness and put us at once into the midst of experience, into the core of the theme. In this point Donne foreshadows poetic dramas and dramatic poems of the modern age.

In style Donne carves out a new path too. He does not make use of the easy and the familiar, the mythological imagery; he carefully avoids the association of the Christian pantheon and rejects

the spoils of Greek and Latin poetry. At the cost of being enigmatic he takes pleasure only in the subtle. In this respect he strongly influences the modern poets, especially Eliot against whom a charge of obscurity is often levelled. But this obscurity is due more to the innovation in the poetic style than to the theme. Donne and the modern poets like Eliot and Yeats revolutionised the linguistic medium by bringing it closer to the vocabulary of the common man, although Wordsworth and Coleridge thought of this seriously for the first time.

Nevertheless, we may now conclude that Donne was the most independent poet of Elizabethan age. While the other Elizabethans were jovial under the first flush of the Renaissance, Donne was the solitary phenomenon, the singular personality who, having made a significant departure from contemporary literary practices, initiated a new poetic tradition. By birth and culture he was an Elizabethan, but in spirit and attitude towards life he was strikingly modern, and the modern poet goes by skipping over the centuries back to Donne and finds in him a potential guide. Donne was sufficiently ahead of his time, an outspoken champion of personalisation of emotions and passions, having given the most vigorous expression to his own ideas. Some of his poems, indeed, are characterised by a tremendous explosion of personal energy. He was following no tradition nor did he build up a new one for others to follow; he cared little for either predecessors or successors, and it is in this, we believe, that Donne's excellence lies. He was no John Milton nor Matthew Arnold although he resembled both as a man who knew much. While the great Shakespeare working under a feudal set-up, dealing with people of the highest stratum of society, conceal his personality often behind his art, Donne fully reveals his by attaching the greatest importance to his own responses to love and religion, and to his attitude towards versification. In short, Donne writes with confidence, not with conviction. Confidence emits vigour of the mind while conviction means firmly settling down, means calm composure or tranquillity which again indicates death of mental and intellectual activity. A study of John Donne gives one the abiding impression of a mind terribly disturbed, never at rest, an intensely operative and agile mind vigorously reacting to varied aspects of love and religion and trying to evolve a novel linguistic pattern akin

to the spoken tongue of the common man. Indeed, with Donne's poetry the modern poet steps into a new territory.

Donne exercises a strong and absorbing influence on such modern poets as Eliot, Yeats and Hopkins. Like Donne, Yeats and Eliot are terribly troubled in mind, and almost the entire poetic career of Yeats passes through a conflict between the artist and the realist, between the dreamer and the observer. Both of them are unhappy with the existing order of the present day, with the running situations of life in modern times. The fever and fret, the sick hurry and divided aims of to-day make a repulsive impact upon their mind, and they make persistent quests for 'fresh grounds and pastures new', for evolving new themes, ideas, imageries, and an adequate linguistic medium in order to cover in their poetry the kaleidoscopic view of things in an age of flux. Indeed, the Elizabethan age and the modern period are in some way analogous in the sense that the Elizabethan age experienced new enthusiasm, as the surging tide of the Italian Renaissance reached the shores of England, and the modern age witnesses the development of knowledge and research in varied spheres, especially the growth of disciplines like tele-communication, space technology, journalism and linguistics. With man's historic landing on it the moon is no longer a subject of astronomy but has become part and parcel of physics and chemistry. However, with the growth of material prosperity people's eyes are often lost in the glitter of paraphernalia, and as such deeper issues of life are ignored, and especially faith in religion is partly shaken. Eliot notes with a whimper the sordid ugliness of modern life in 'Preludes'. 'The thousand sordid images / Of which your soul was constituted', and experiences spiritual emptiness in the modern world as evident in his repeated references to 'empty cisterns' and 'exhausted wells', 'empty chapel', 'empty rooms', [The Waste Land, Bk V, LL 66-67] and is shocked to discover dreariness in cities like 'Jerusalem Athens Alexandria / Vienna London / Unreal'. Yeats also shares almost the same attitude as revealed in 'Byzantine'. The modern period, like the Elizabethan era, is an age of fluidity. The mind of the modern poet is, therefore, terribly disturbed, and as such the most sensitive poets of the age like Yeats and Eliot with a profound awareness of yawning spiritual vacuum find themselves in a deep, dark and turbulent sea looking for someone who may

guide them out of the cross-currents of modern times, and at last they feel relieved in discovering such a personality in John Donne.

Yeats, like Donne, metes out to love and religion varying treatments. In 'The Indian to His Love' [Yeats, *Poems*, London, Ernest Benn Limited, 1912, P. 217] he deals with the sensuous aspect of love,

How we alone of mortals are
Hid under quiet bows apart,
While our love grows an Indian star,
A meteor of the burning heart,
One with the tide that gleams, the wings that gleam and dart,

and moves a step further in 'The Two Trees' (p. 147) to muse upon the spiritual element involved in erotic intercourse in addition to its carnal aspect. This is a great love poem by Yeats; it is a poem of a very high order where we experience co-existence of both the sensual and the spiritual aspects of love, and in this respect the poem is reminiscent of Donne's 'The Good-Morrow'. The tree of life indicates a strong involvement in material life with its joys through which alone the spiritual state can be attained. The tree of knowledge, however, can be implanted only in the heart,

Beloved, gaze in thine own heart,
The holy tree is growing there ;
* * * *

There, through bewildered branches, go
Winged Loves borne on in gentle strife,
Tossing and tossing to and fro
The flaming circle of our life.

Gaze no more in the bitter glass
* * * *

For there a fatal image grows
* * * *

All things turn to barrenness
In the dim glass the demons hold,
* * * *

There, through the broken branches, go
The ravens of unresting thought ;
Peering and flying to and fro
To see men's souls bartered and bought.

'The Countess Cathleen in Paradise' is characterised by a spiritual

overtone although the Countess cannot totally forget even in heaven her sensual mortal life. Nevertheless, Yeats succeeds in transmuting the lady's physical charms into a spiritual purification. The poem seeks to exhibit how spirituality overwhelms voluptuousness and conveys the final message of elevation of the spirit of Cathleen,

Did the kiss of Mother Mary,
Put that music in her face ?
Yet she goes with footstep wary
Full of earth's old timid grace.

Again, Yeats in 'The Indian Upon God' dwells, perhaps like an Indian, on a fundamental metaphysical question involving appearance and reality, and discovers the operation of the divine spirit through a moorfowl, a lotus, a roebuck and a peacock. Something like the pantheistic vision of ultimate reality has been attained in this poem. Yeats evolves from a dreamer to a realist, and from a realist to a passionate metaphysical seer. He experiences spiritual barrenness of the modern world. He draws away from science : facts in themselves meant nothing in the spiritual universe of elemental forces which he perceived. He scorns the "new commonness" of democratic equality, has no faith in "progress" as it is understood. Life is a reservoir of racial memories from which he migrates to the land of imagination, into a fairyland, and he is ensnared for life into a longing for magic, the magic of symbolic evocation. As the years passed Yeats developed an enigmatic personality ; he made no compromise with the newly emerging world, "There is not a fool can call me friend". In 'A Prayer For My Daughter' he would have her "live like a green laurel / Rooted in one dear perpetual place", where "The soul recovers radical innocence", and learns that it is self-delighting ; let "her bridegroom bring her to a house, where all's accustomed, ceremonious". This is how the old poet remains in his lonely tower on the remote Irish shore. It is in this attitude of Yeats drawing away from the present into the past for restoring harmony of the soul that his metaphysical proneness is revealed. 'Byzantine' enshrines the poet's longing for the past history. But the structure of the poem is complex ; it is written against the backdrop of the church, and historical, anthropological and Biblical allusions get mixed up here. The structure of the poem, therefore, resembles that in Donne, Vaughan, Herbert and Traherne. Again, the use of such bold but novel imageries as 'that vivacious girl like

a silver trout', 'enamelled sea', 'a wizard song' and 'the pilgrim soul' is in the metaphysical tradition of Donne.

T. S. Eliot, like W. B. Yeats, is also considerably indebted to Donne. He epitomises Donne's carnality and spirituality in a few lines reposing in his 'Whispers of Immortality', and there he says of Donne,

* * * *

Who found no substitute for senses,
To seize and clutch and penetrate ;
Expert beyond experience :

He knew the anguish of the marrow
The ague of the skeleton ;
No contact possible to flesh
Allayed the fever of the bone.

The love-song of Prufrock strikes a note of sheer voluptuousness,

And I have known the arms already, known them all—
Arms that are braceleted and white and bare
[But in the lamplight, downed with light brown hair !]
Is it perfume from a dress
That makes me so digress ?

Arms that lie along a table, or wrap about a shawl.

And should I then presume ?
And how should I begin ?

But we discover in Eliot, as in Donne, co-existence of sensuality and spirituality and 'The Hippopotamus' is a shining testimony to this,

At mating time the hippo's voice
Betrays inflexions hoarse and odd,
But every week we hear rejoice
The Church, at being one with God.

* * * *

Blood of the Lamb shall wash him clean
And him shall heavenly arms enfold,
* * * *

He shall be washed as white as snow,
By all the martyr'd virgins kist,

'The Hippopotamus' is a great poem ; in it Eliot depicts the beatification of the animal spirit through elevation to paradise of the

spirit of the humble hippo and this is certainly reminiscent of Donne's 'Being red, it dyes red soules to white', and of Yeats's. 'The Countess Cathleen in Paradise'. However, 'Animula', another poem of Eliot, suggests a spiritual quest; it deals with soul issuing from the hand of God, but the squalor on earth overwhelms it, and Eliot strongly resents the overshadowing of soul in the manner of Donne by the depressing complexities of life. The poet in the closing lines of the poem sends out a prayer for those who might save the majesty and grandeur of soul coming straight from heaven. If 'The Hippopotamus' is Eliot's thesis on purification and salvation, then 'Animula' is certainly the antithesis although he ends the poem on a note of hope for the lost soul on earth.

In 'Ash-Wednesday' again, Eliot handles a new spiritual experience. The poem opens with a tension between birth and dying, passes through a conflict between mortal longing and eternal bliss attained by means of merging in the spirit infinite. But in Eliot and Donne there is, unlike in Dante, no suggestion of unconditional surrender to the will of God. The theme of the poem is a quest for peace found in humble and quiet submission to God's will. We ought to keep in mind that this is a poem not of Easter joy but of the beginning of the penitential season; it indicates a journey along the mystic way, but no mystic vision is attained. The final impression that remains is that of an intellectual effort to find faith rather than that of a spiritual conviction surging from within. Nevertheless, it is obvious that Eliot and Yeats, like Donne, do not follow any centralised faith, but they proceed from sensuality to spirituality, from the immediate to the ultimate, and from the commonplace to the sublime in their treatment of love and religion.

Again, Eliot, like Yeats, is greatly aware of the spiritual bankruptcy of the modern age, and as such explores new themes collected from distant environments of forgotten times. His 'Four Quartets' incorporating four poems, viz. 'Burnt Norton', 'East Coker', 'The Dry Salvages', and 'Little Gidding', acquaints us with the intensity of religious truth that forges majestically ahead to a new hope in the Christian idea of rebirth and renewal. 'The Waste Land' based on the medieval legend of the Fisher King presents a city of to-day as an arid waste land. The poem embodying symbols of drought and flood represents death and rebirth. The tendency of a major poet

like Eliot to go back to the Middle Ages and to Donne is inspired by the emptiness of the present. Donne, Yeats, and Eliot chose to draw away from their own time. Besides, Eliot's technical devices and those of Donne are strikingly similar. The conversational tone and the vocabulary at once colloquial and surprisingly strange are a product of Eliot's belief in the relation of poetry to actual speech. Again, the occasional use of 'non-poetic material', the rapid association of ideas which demands alert agility from the reader, the irregular verse and the difficult sentence structure as a part of fidelity to thought and feeling; and especially the flash of wit characterise the poetic style of Eliot. He makes copious use of epigrams and witty expressions in the vein of Donne. Such bold imageries as 'Coffee-spoons', 'trouser-cuffs', and 'an etherized patient' have been drawn from things hitherto regarded as unpoetic. Again, imageries like

Midnight shakes the memory

As a madman shakes a dead geranium

and the corner of a prostitute's eye twisting like a crooked pin and
'whisper'

As wind in dry grass

Or rats' feet over broken glass

and 'the stairs...dark/Damp, jagged, like an oldman's mouth drivelling/beyond repair' or toothed gullet of an aged shark are strikingly unconventional and novel and strongly evocative of situations. Moreover, Eliot's expression like 'To have squeezed the universe into a ball' [The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock, p. 14] breathes tremendous vigour of the mind and is reminiscent of the dazzling sunshine being overwhelmed by the lover's out-dazzling wink in Donne's 'The Sunne Rising'. Eliot himself observes that Donne's great achievement lay in his ability to communicate 'his genuine whole of tangled feelings', as in 'The Extasie', the extraordinary range of feeling from the lightest to the most serious, from the most sensual to the most spiritual—that can inhere in a single mood. In the poetic world of Eliot also we discover the same phenomenon—co-existence of the commonplace and the sublime, levity and gravity, the spiritual and the carnal. Eliot's technical devices also closely resemble those of Donne. His poems, like Donne's are characterised by a wide range and variety of interests. Indeed, Eliot is a worthy

heir to the thematic and stylistic traditions built up by the leading light of the metaphysical group of poets.

G. M. Hopkins, like Donne, has an impassioned zeal to introduce an innovation in the sphere of poetry. He was closely associated with Christianity as Father Hopkins and explores religious themes in 'The Windhover', 'Pied Beauty', 'The Starlight Night', and 'Winnowing of the Wind'. He deals with Christ, and asks some metaphysical questions. Neither scepticism nor theism characterises his attitude towards religion; he develops agnosticism at a later phase of his life and this governs his reactions to Christ and God. But, as a matter of fact, thematic quality is not so important in Hopkins as technical novelty introduced in the sphere of English prosody. Hopkins revolutionized the English prosodic process. He explains in detail his new theory of prosody in a preface written in 1883 and seems to have arrived at a compromise between the foot system and the musical bar system. He discovers in Common Rhythm or Running Rhythm a succession of feet of either two or three syllables being 'slacks'. Anapaestic and Iambic feet constitute Running Rhythm while Trochaic and Dactylic feet constitute falling Rhythm. He thinks that for the purpose of scanning it is a great convenience to follow the example of music and take the stress always first as in a musical bar. If this were done, there would be only two basic rhythms—the Dactylic and the Trochaic, though these may sometimes be mixed.

Hopkins, however, thinks that further freedom in versification is permissible and possible. He holds a brief for 'Counterpointed Rhythm' first—if, for instance, normally Iambic verse is interpolated with frequent trochaic substitutions, specially so as to include the sensitive second foot, two rhythms may be said to co-exist, the basic Iambic rhythm and the superimposed Trochaic rhythm, and this conjunction of two rhythms Hopkins calls 'Counterpointed Rhythm'. Milton is a great master of this kind of verse, and the choruses of *Samson Agonistes* are written throughout in it. Milton's basic rhythm is the conventional syllabic metre in the accentuated Iam as a standard foot. But the opening of the first chorus is as near to the Greek lyric rhythm as non-quantitative English Verse could be,

This this is he, softly, a—while
Let us not break in upon him.

Early examples of counterpointed Rhythm in Hopkins are found in 'God's Grandeur' and 'The Starlight Night'. The following lines testify to the aforesaid rhythm,

And wear / man smudge
And shares / man's smell / : the sail.

But even the felicity and latitude of 'Counterpointed Rhythm' did not satisfy Hopkins ; he revised pre-Chaucerian English rhythm and called it 'Sprung Rhythm'. If we counterpoint throughout a poem, the original rhythm will be destroyed or lost, and that is actually what happens in the choruses of *Samson Agonistes*. Then the result is what Hopkins calls 'Sprung Rhythm'. There will be four kinds of feet consisting of one, two, three or four syllables respectively, but the stress should fall on the first or the only syllable, and besides, the four kinds of feet may freely be mixed so that any one may follow any other kind of feet. In 'Sprung Rhythm' the feet are assumed to be equally long or strong, and their seeming inequality is made up by pause or stressing. Such rhythms cannot be counterpointed. Moreover, it is natural in 'Sprung Rhythm' for the lines to be 'rove over', for the scanning of each line to take that of the one before, and, in fact, the scanning runs on without break from the beginning of a stanza to the end and all the stanza is a long strain, though on lines asunder. Hopkins's 'Ding-dung-bell' consists of three stressed syllables and its rhythm, is, therefore, 'Sprung'. So is the rhythm of Tennyson's 'Break, break, break'. From 'Windhover' it can be shown :

Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume here
Buckle ! And the fire that breaks from there, a million
Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my chivaliar !

The 'Sprung Rhythm' is the rhythm of common speech and of written prose, when rhythm is perceived in them. It is the rhythm of all but the most monotonously regular music, so that it arises in the words of choruses and refrains and in songs written closely to music. It is found in nursery rhymes and it arises in common verse when reversed or counterpointed. And it is the rhythm of all the genuine *verse libre* or free verse which has arisen in Hopkins's time. Nevertheless, it is obvious that Hopkins took a great interest in introducing an innovation in the sphere of English prosody and in that way shares the revolutionary spirit of Donne. Dylan Thomas

(1914—1953), also like Donne, explores new themes, especially religious themes, in his poems and employs technical devices in the manner of Yeats and Eliot. In his most sensuous poems he has left a deep impression of his prying curiosity about spirituality. The feeling of 'Saving the Soul' is being gradually brought into larger practice in modern English poetry.

In concluding our discussion we may emphasise that John Donne and a few such major poets as Yeats, Eliot and Hopkins share a common attitude by insisting on an exploration of newer and newer avenues, 'fresh grounds and pastures new' in themes with strikingly bold treatment meted out to them, in employing novel, unconventional but effective imageries, by asking some fundamental questions relating to God and soul, by evolving an adequate linguistic medium to cover the kaleidoscopic canvas of knowledge in varied spheres, and sometimes by revolutionising the prosodic process. Each of them experiences some barrenness, some emptiness, some vacuum in the particular sphere of life to which each one belongs and gives the most vigorous expression to emotions, feelings and passions of his own. And John Donne, their distant predecessor, who perhaps spurned the idea of being a predecessor guides them out of the crossroads of varied spheres of modern wisdom and enables them to discern the right path. Indeed, what strikes us so strongly in the study of Donne is the composite character of his poems. His poem has the passionate intensity of a Romeo, the brooding despondency of a Hamlet, the queer religiosity of a fallen but disillusioned Faustus, the debonair witticism of a Congreve and the adamantive defiance of a Prometheus. It is for this wide range and variety of interests that the poet of to-day feels attracted towards Donne. In fact, he is the beaconlight to the modern poet, he is the polestar giving a sense of direction to him who like a confounded mariner finds himself in the deep, dark and troubled sea of the modern world of creative activity. The modern poet, as a matter of fact, finds a potential friend, philosopher and guide in John Donne whose influence upon him is profound and enduring and will perhaps continue to be so for ages yet unborn.

MOLLY BLOOM'S "YES" : AFFIRMATION AND AMBIVALENCE IN JAMES JOYCE'S *ULYSSES*

ALOK RAI

THEMES of division, and the eventual resolution of division in an act of affirmation, form the staple of much serious writing, but the nature of the moral choice involved in James Joyce's *Ulysses* is, I believe, deserving of detailed attention. However, in order to appreciate the precise quality of the "outrageous affirmation" that we are offered in *Ulysses*—Molly Bloom's hypnotic "...yes I said yes I will Yes."—we need to look, not merely at *Ulysses* but to trace in some detail the course by which Joyce has arrived at his catholic affirmation of the ordinary, the everyday, the commonplace.

Evidence of a fundamental split in his make-up is to be found fairly early in Joyce's work. When, in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, (hereafter, *Portrait*), he writes of "the call of life to his soul", this "call" is perceived to be in opposition to "the dull gross voice of the world of duties and despair" and also to that "inhuman voice that had called him to the pale service of the altar."¹ This, we note, is no more than the conventional aesthetic antinomy; but as he warms to his theme we notice, in a writer of Joyce's sensitivity, a curious chord, a delicious hint of self-parody :

His soul was swooning into some new world, fantastic, dim, uncertain as under the sea, traversed by cloudy shapes and beings. A world, a glimmer, or a flower? Glimmering and trembling, trembling and unfolding, a breaking light, an opening flower, it spread in endless succession to itself, breaking in full crimson and unfolding and fading to palest rose, leaf by leaf and wave of light by wave of light, flooding all the heavens with its soft flashes, every flush deeper than the other.²

The prose here is, I believe, too deliberately Pateresque for Joyce not to have been aware that in working out his artistic destiny, in answering "the call of life to his soul" he would have to reject not only "the pale service of the altar" but also the equally "pale service" of the altar of Aesthetic Beauty.

In Joyce-Stephen's high and lonely arrogance there is a note of helplessness, of the suffocation of emotional impotence, of a narcissism crossed with anguish. Even though Duffy ('A Painful Case') is a portrait of Stanislaus, the identification with Joyce himself is too close to be irrelevant :

...he heard the strange impersonal voice which he recognised as his own, insisting on the soul's *incurable* loneliness. We cannot give ourselves, it said : we are our own.³

The view that Joyce was only a reluctant dweller in the multi-mirrored palace of art finds independent confirmation, as early as 1900, in an essay called 'Drama and Life' :

Shall we put life—real life—on the stage ? No, says the Philistine chorus, for it will not draw... Parnassus and the city Bank divide the souls of the peddlers...

—then the helpless slide away—

Life indeed nowadays is often a sad bore. ...The traditions of romance are upheld only in-Bohemia. *Still*, I think out of the dreary sameness of existence, a measure of dramatic life may be drawn. Even the most commonplace, the deadest among the living, men play a part in a great drama.⁴

The distinction that Joyce makes between the Romantic and the Classical temper, first in the essay on Mangan (1902), and later in *Stephen Hero* is significant. Even though his definition of the romantic temper—"impatient with reality"—describes accurately his fictional prototype :

...an insecure, unsatisfied, impatient temper which sees no fit abode here for its ideals and chooses therefore to behold them under insensible figures,⁵

yet even this prototype, Stephen, is straining towards, and overtly affirming, the classical temper, the "sane and joyful spirit."⁶ But, as Goldberg has remarked, "to understand ... that the objectivity and 'indifference' of the dramatic artist has nothing of cold withdrawn superiority to life about it but is rather a wisdom wrung from the process of living—all this is just beyond his present grasp."⁷

It is not difficult to see the biographical over-determining causes of the early-Joyce's withdrawn arrogance, his temporary submission to the dominant aesthetic of his time. He writes in *Stephen Hero* :

He could feel about him and above him the hopeless house and the decay of leaves and in his soul the one bright *insistent* star of joy trembling at her wane.⁸

The existential predicament is spelt out in *Portrait* :

He had tried to build a breakwater of order and elegance against the sordid tide of life without him and to dam up, by rules of conduct and active interests and new filial relations, the powerful recurrence of the tide within him. Useless. From without as from within, the water had flowed over his barriers : their tides began once more to jostle fiercely above the crumbled mole.⁹

Just as well, one might add, for it was just these muddy waters that were the source even of artistic life—but the young Joyce needed time, an opportunity to perfect his apparatus before allowing himself to brave the deluge :

He gave himself no great trouble to sustain the boldnesses which were expressed or implied in his essays. He threw them out as sudden defence-works while he was busy constructing the enigma of a manner.¹⁰

"Classicism", he writes later, "is a constant state of mind. It is a temper of security and satisfaction and patience."¹¹ It was not possible to make casually, or on the run, the affirmation of *Ulysses*.

The stabilising, though as yet unrealised, awareness of the moral seriousness of art is clearly stated in *Stephen Hero* :

The age, though it bury itself fathoms deep in formulas and machinery, has need of these realities which alone give and sustain life and it must await from these chosen centres of vivification the force to live, the security for life which can come to it only from them. Thus the spirit of man makes a continual affirmation.¹²

Goldberg has remarked the "visible" growth between 1900 and 1902. He writes :

Joyce now saw, however inadequately, that the "truth" of art is the enrichment, the continual affirmation of the moral spirit.¹³

Goldberg goes on to say that, in his book-reviews of 1903, Joyce was willing to apply the canons of "classicism" even against "the vagueness, the greed for the absolute, of the Symbolists."¹⁴

However, before it can actually *make* this "continual affirmation", the "bat-like soul (must awake) to the consciousness of itself."¹⁵ Critics have remarked the vagueness and uncertainty of the affirmation in his earlier work. This becomes understandable in the light of the foregoing analysis because the strength of this work drives from a kinetic recoil *away* from life. At the *end* of that movement, he must start the slow, hard grind back towards a mature self-awareness—an awareness which includes and is included by an aware-

ness of his world—an awareness which is understanding which is, within the limited terms of Joyce's work at least, affirmation.

His intense self-absorption is, perhaps, the only way to a real objective awareness—the lonely, solipsist eminence appears almost a precondition for an *aware* participation in the grubby life below. As Bloom says: "Longest way round is the shortest way home."¹⁶ Alun Jones seems to have the same idea when he speaks of:

...the ironic, self-absorbed attitude of mind which allows him to regard the comic-tragedy of his creation with such remorseless indulgence.¹⁷

The splendid arrogance of the early Stephen appears, therefore, as a painful but necessary pilgrimage, at the end of which the artist finds himself. To quote Bloom again: "Think you're escaping and run into yourself."¹⁸

Yet, long before the realised awareness itself, we find in Joyce a sense of the *direction* in which he would, and must, move:

The snares of the world were its ways of sin. He would fall. He had not yet fallen, but he would fall silently, in an instant. Not to fall was too hard, too hard: and felt the silent lapse of his soul, as it would be at some instant to come, falling, falling, but not yet fallen, still unfallen, but about to fall.¹⁹

Even, though, at home, with his brothers and sisters and their squalid misery, he "...heard in all the echoes an echo also of the recurring note of weariness and pain. All seemed weary of life even before entering upon it"²⁰—still, it was "too hard" *not* to fall. The artistic implication of "falling" is spelt out later:

...to try slowly and humbly and constantly to express, to press out again, from the gross earth or what it brings forth, from sound and shape and colour which are the prison-gates of our soul, an image of the beauty we have come to understand—that is art.²¹

There are many and unmistakable signs, by the time we come to *Ulysses*, that having flown too high, Dedalus-Joyce is at last back on the ground. And yet, his *passionate* devotion to the commonplace is hardly as simple as it might appear. Ellmann makes a significant comparison:

There is nothing like Joyce's commonplace in Tolstoy, where the characters, however humble, live dramatically and instil wisdom or tragedy in each other. Joyce was the first to endow an urban man of no importance with heroic consequence.²²

On the level of conscious intention, at any rate, it is not difficult to see what Joyce would affirm. Having had his wings singed by the extraordinary, he is resolutely back to the ordinary, affirming the grubby urchin beauty found in slum backstreets rather than on the cold peaks where the stags flash their antlers. We find Stephen less pompous—"I fear those big words, Stephen said, which make us so unhappy"²²—undercutting himself—"my latin quarter hat. God, we simply must dress the character."²⁴—becoming more vulnerable to the reassuring stabs of existence—"Ah poor dogsbody. Here lies poor dogsbody's dogsbody."²⁵ Bloom is an ideal counterpoint to this self-conscious student of the simple virtues, for he is a veritable knight of the commonplace, a prince of the plebeian, a heartwarming mediocre incarnation of the virtue of simplicity.

Yet, because it is felt that Stephen and Bloom are, in some *basic* sense, contradictory, critics make haste to point out that "Joyce neither simply denies Bloom and Stephen and their world, nor simply 'affirms' them"²⁶. Conveniently enough, there is Joyce's statement about the "theorem" of love :

The world for all its solid substance and complexity no longer existed for his soul save as a theorem of divine power and love and universality.²⁷

And so, the thesis runs, Bloom and Stephen are not in opposition, but are held in balance, *together*—the intelligence of Stephen and the humanity of Bloom—and their sum constitutes a unified statement. I suspect that it does not.

Stephen is moving towards Bloom, but can he ever *be* Bloom ? Stephen is also moving towards Joyce—indeed, he is in a sense, writing *Ulysses*—but is Joyce Bloom ? Or, more precisely, in what relation does Joyce-Stephen stand to Joyce-Bloom ? Can the consciousness that trains the comic perspective ever regain its ignorant innocence ? Or do Stephen and Bloom represent elements that are, *fundamentally*, unassimilable ? Adams asks the question :

How can that lean and predatory mind which is common to Stephen and Joyce, come to terms with the blurred six-inch margins of Bloom's brain ? The answer appears in an act of vision, an act performed in 'Penelope'.²⁸

Joyce, too, was of the opinion that 'Penelope' was the *clou* of the book. Evidence of what he *intended* with Molly is to be found in his notecards :

MB=spinning Earth
yes, yes, yes, yes, yes.¹⁹

In addition there is his remark, made to Budgen, about Molly representing :

sanè full amoral fertilisable untrustworthy enjoying limited prudent indifferent Weib.²⁰

Joyce's expressed intention may therefore, I suppose, be adduced as extenuation for the flatulent claims of the first generation of Joyce critics, their uncritical surrender to the deceptive charm of Molly Bloom's hypnotic litany. Consider Budgen :

What she symbolises is evident: it is the teeming earth with her countless brood of created things.²¹

For Levin, Gea-Tellus/Molly "incarnates the fertility of the earth."²² According to Tindall, Molly is not only "the Great Mother of the ancients" but more. He writes :

...as he substituted Bloom for God and earthly father, so Joyce substituted Mrs Bloom for the virgin and his earthly mother. As Stephen discovers humanity in Bloom, so Joyce, going beyond Stephen, discovers life itself in Mrs Bloom.²³

At the other extreme from this kind of excess, we have J. Mitchell Morse's position :

She is a dirty joke. No one regards her as anything but a whore.

But when he goes on to say :

Molly's soliloquy is the bitterest, deadliest thing Joyce ever wrote. Without exhorting or haranguing his readers, observing strictly his own canon of reticence, he let Molly damn herself as the very centre of paralysis.²⁴

we feel that he is going beyond his critical prerogative, because Joyce's *intention* in the matter is explicit enough.

Steinberg—'A Book with a Molly in it'—also deflates the claims of earlier critics. Whereas he agrees that her animality *is* a kind of affirmation, he warns against being betrayed into the kind of hollowness—unthinking self-absorption—*against* which alone does Bloom have significance.²⁵

Adams offers a defence of Molly :

Molly is lazy and ignorant and vulgar in her habits—but then, Bloom, though undeniably a sun-god, isn't exactly Apollo Belvedere. A symbol, in other words, need not be a paradigm...²⁶

Yet Adams is aware that the book ends not with a triumphantly affirmative "Yes" but with a weary silence, beyond language and trying:

.. It builds to acute and painful states of consciousness, yet its larger ambition seems to be to put aside consciousness as a painful burden.³⁷

Joyce has avoided the painful awareness of a fundamental and inescapable schism by taking refuge in Molly's dark protoplasmal energy. Such seems to be the substance, also, of R. P. Blackmur's complaint:

Molly is necessary to any culture but not as its foundation; she is rather the basic building material...³⁸

That Joyce, too, was aware that he was indulging in what might, somewhat harshly, be called a literary sleight of hand, is indicated by one of the 'Circe' notesheets:

Go away from language to learn.³⁹

(SD + LB = idem)

The parenthesis explains why it was necessary to "go away from language" — "SD + LB = idem" — i. e., $SD + LB = SD + LB$. Or, to put the matter in words, there is no escaping from the schizoid and mutually-unassimilable nature of the proposed unity unless he goes beyond affirmation, beyond language, beyond thought. Stephen "laughed to free his mind from his mind's bondage",⁴⁰ but the last laugh is probably on him. Joyce possibly hypnotised himself and almost certainly hypnotises his readers by Molly's sleepy, repetitive affirmatives, "the final blind vitality of an assertion from the loins."⁴¹

But what is the actual significance of this "blind...assertion from the loins"? In its final act the self that "went forth to the ends of the world to traverse not itself, God, the sun, Shakespeare, a commercial traveller, having traversed in reality itself, becomes that self."⁴² And what is this "self" that it "becomes"—i. e. affirms? Blackmur's characterisation of Molly is apt, and shattering: "...The self *before* it understands itself."⁴³

After the initial loss of innocence which the awareness and experience of the never-resting intellect entails, the most that Joyce appears to be capable of is a *negative* affirmation of thoughtlessness that undercuts him—undercuts him even as he gains the perspective

to undercut himself. After such knowledge as Stephen's lonely impatience with reality implies, there is little forgiveness possible. Molly Bloom's dark and lyrical torrent is really an abdication of affirmation; or rather, an affirmation of affirmation, which is meaningless—a set of parallel mirrors which will reflect to infinity *anything* which is placed between them; and this is the only way in which she can avoid the possibility of being seen as she is, and of being judged as she is. She is the only person in the novel who is not a mirror.

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PINTER'S NO MAN'S LAND : THE CARETAKER AGAIN

SURENDRA SAHAI

IN 1967 Pinter said about his work: "I can't see a consistency in my work. I have no idea whether the plays have a consistency or not. Each play is quite a different world. The problem is to create a unique world in each case with a totally different set of characters. With a totally different environment."¹ This was said around the time *The Basement* was broadcast on the B.B.C. to be followed in due course by *Landscape*, *Silence*, *Night*, and *Old Times*. *No Man's Land*, Pinter's latest play, written eight years after the above statement, establishes a point on the opposite. It is a difficult job for any playwright to be different on each occasion and with Pinter it seems to have been particularly so. When Pinter came to write for the stage his mind carried over some impressions of his life in the East End of London which was a political battlefield. Danger to life lurking in every corner of street and the utmost necessity of polite conversation to save one's skin had their own effect on Pinter's mind. There was a great fear of strangers, of intruders who violated privacy with a vengeance and the equally great scare of exposing oneself to a new man was full of dangerous possibilities : "this thing, of people arriving at the door, has been happening in Europe in the last twenty years. Not only the last twenty years, the last two to three hundred."² The man outside the door became an agent of malevolent forces. Consequently the security offered by the room in itself became a coveted thing. Pinter began with the premise that the visitor was an agent of destruction, disruption, evil and thus a menace to the occupants.

In *No Man's Land* (Eyre Methuen 1975) the visitor is an invited guest, one who comes along with the host Hirst.

Spooner : Do you often hang about Hampstead Heath ?

Hirst : No.

Spooner : But on your excursions ... however rare ... on your rare excursions ... you hardly expect to run into the likes of me ? I take it.
(Pp. 17-18).

Aston mentions an instance when a woman made a sudden proposal to him: "She said, how would you like me to have a look at your body?" Davies had his own share of experiences with women: "women? There's many a time they've come up to me and asked me more or less the same question." (P. 25) Hirst and Spooner exchange reminiscences about their youth. Hirst is still curious about Emily, he fell in love with once upon a time. Spooner enquires: "Do you ever see Stella?" Arabella Hinscott seems to have aroused them both to a certain degree. Spooner "needles the posture" hereby agreeing to have had a sort of an affair with Arabella: "She had no wish for full consummation. She was content with her particular predilection. Consuming the male member." Hirst retorts, hurt: "I'm beginning to believe you've a scoundrel." (P. 76) Like Davies, Spooner is forever finding fault with Hirst and, despite poor circumstances chasing his present, will not accept an inferior position.

Davies is very proud of his past, whatever it has been: "I've eaten my dinner off the best of plates." (P. 9) Spooner goes a step further: "Well, to be quite honest, I'm a champagne drinker." (P. 63) To carry the hangover from *The Caretaker* a little further there reappears the confusion about identity. Davies has changed his name to Bernard Jenkins and is greatly worried about his papers lying in Sideup. Hirst also mistakes Spooner for Charles Wetherby.

The two indispensable parasites, Briggs and Foster, looking after Hirst start bullying Spooner the moment they find him pottering around the ostentatious drawing room. Their motives are unmistakable. They have to keep the place clear of all intruders and creepers. Foster is hostile and sniggering as he introduces Spooner to Briggs: "His name is Friend. This is Mr. Briggs. Mr. Friend, Mr. Briggs. I'm Mr. Foster. Old English Stock. John Foster" (p. 36) and later: "He's every-body's bloody friend. How many friends have you got altogether, Mr. Friend?" (P. 38) In the earlier play when Mick meets Davies, the latter has already won the confidence of Aston who leaves him alone in the room where he is caught fiddling with the objects around. Mick physically humbles the old tramp: "What's the game?" (p. 29), he asks Davies. *No Man's Land* and *The Caretaker* have 'parts' for the players. The long verbal perambulations are intended to create

some awe in the listener. In *No Man's Land* Foster makes a pointless protracted observation beginning "What are you drinking?" Before asking "Who are you, by the way?" Mick takes no time to launch a similar tirade: "You remind me of my uncle's brother" which seems to go on endlessly before he is reminded to enquire "I hope you slept well last night." (P. 31) Within minutes Mick begins his second attack well known for its use of the bus routes, all because to him Davies bears a funny resemblance to a bloke Mick once knew in Shoreditch. All the familiar roads are named till he cares to ask again: "Did you sleep here last night?" (P. 32). It is disgustingly Pinteresque and his ways have not changed despite his protests, so much so that in *No Man's Land* there is, first, Foster's silly narration: "When I was out East" (p. 42) and later it is Briggs' chance to hold us entranced with: "We're old friends Jack and myself. We met at a street corner..... He asked me the way to the Bolsover street." What follows is the most stupid, most pompous and the most pointless piece of dramatic writing in Pinter—going round and round the Post Office Tower, "pure verbal excrement",⁸ undoubtedly.

How Pinter keeps using the same material over and over again is amply established by the similarity of the ingratiating promises held by both the visitors—Davies and Spooner. The good for nothing Davies is confident, though inexperienced: "I am a capable sort of man. I mean to say, I've had plenty offers in my time, you know, there's no getting away from that." (P. 50) Spooner's offer to Hirst plays on the latter's literary pretensions: "Let me live with you and be your secretary". Davies has earned some footing because of his references: "I got plenty of references. All I got to do is to go down to sideup tomorrow. I got all the references I want down there". (P. 51) Spooner's World is rosier: "I'm a staunch friend of the arts, particularly the art of poetry, and a guide to the young. I keep open house. Young poets come to me". (Pp. 27-28) He promises a rejuvenation of his host's literary career by organising the latter's affairs if only Hirst would "consider seriously the social implication of such an adventure". (P. 90).

Mick turns the tables on Davies by reacting violently when the latter calls Aston "nutty": "You're really strange. Ever since you come into this house there's been nothing but trouble. Honest. I

can take nothing you say at face value." (P. 73) Foster is equally curt to Spooner: "Listen, my friend, This man in this Chair, he's a creative man. He's an artist. We make life possible for him. We're in a position of trust. Don't try to drive a wedge into a happy household... Don't try to make a nonsense out of family life." (P. 50)

These similarities would appear superficial and inconsequential to my point that Pinter is wrong when he claims that each play he has written is a different world if the protagonist in *No Man's Land* and *The Caretaker* were not a little soft and incapable of standing on their own feet. Hirst has, in fact, hired two bullies to look after him and Aston would lean on any extended hand. Hirst is certainly not an example of self confidence. The sentimental attachment which he has towards the album of photographs is sickly: "We're talking of my youth, which can never leave me. No. It existed. It was solid; the people in it were solid, while..... transformed by light, while being sensitive... to all the changing light" (P. 45) His dream is the Crux of his poetic existence, whatever it is. At best it strikes a queer posture of sham poetising: "I am walking towards a lake. Some one is following me, through the trees. I lose him, easily. I see a body in the water, floating. I am excited. I look closer and see I was mistaken. There is nothing in the water. I say to myself, I saw a body, drowning. But I am mistaken. There's nothing there". (P. 95) Aston in *the Caretaker* goes on a rambling monologue to explain the present softness of his brain, which keeps him away from work: "Then one day they took me to a hospital, right outside London." (P. 55) The torture inflicted on his mind in the hospital and the harrowing awareness of his mother's complicity in the whole operation left him shaky to this day. Davies is meant to instil a new confidence in him and Aston wants Davies' help in this effort to come out of this mental state. Both Hirst and Aston have to help themselves without the external help.

Offers of help are repulsed in both the cases and both, Davies and Spooner, themselves thrown out of sympathy. Davies keeps pleading with Aston for another chance, pathetic in his helplessness: "What am I going to do? (Pause) What shall I do? (Pause) Where am I going to go?" (Pp. 77-78) Long silence envelops

the stage. Davies is neither in nor out. The same predilection meets Spooner. After listening to Spooner's offer of secretaryship Hirst's cold answer is: "Let us change the subject." (P. 91) Spooner's final observation sums up the mental state of Hirst and applies as well to Aston: "You are in no man's land. Which never moves, which never changes, which never grows older, but which remains forever, icy and silent." (P. 95)

I have gone on some length to prove striking similarities between the two plays to prove each play is really not so different. In fact some other plays share the same situations and contain stylistic similarities with *No Man's Land*. One image that has stayed with Harold Pinter all through is that of the 'room': "Obviously, they are scared of what is outside the room. Outside the room is a world bearing upon them, which is frightening... we are all in this, all in a room, and outside is a world which is most inexplicable and frightening, curious and alarming."⁴ On this image Pinter has written *The Room*, *The Dumb Waiter*, *The Birthday Party*, *The Basement*, *The Dwarfs*. The striking similarity is not just a coincidence but shows the basic poverty of Pinter's imagination. The ending of quite a few plays is manipulated to create ambiguity of intention. Blindness of Ruth, fate of Gus and Stanley, Edward's acceptance of the matchseller's tray, James' lukewarm approach to his wife's seducer, Law and Scott's fighting for the girl and room, Teddy's indifference to his wife's new role as a prostitute, the reality of Anna's existence and the presence of two mugs in his latest play—they are all purposefully created, deliberately planned and cleverly manipulated tricks which should more than prove that all the plays are really not as different as one would wish for from a playwright who has written eighteen plays including *No Man's Land*, his latest. The basic existential dilemma facing man lingers on and one suspects Pinter's originality. The tradition of Beckett and Kafka continues in British theatre through the efforts of Pinter whose characters feint an ironic dubious smile as an alternative to a clear step which remains shrouded in mystery—who knows what happens to Davies after the final curtain and what happens to Spooner's offer of secretaryship and friendship to Hirst. In fact that would be like repeating the endless interrogations—why this and why that, which is only typically Pinter; which is Pinter's "no man's land.

Which never moves, which never changes, which never grows older, but which remains forever, icy and silent". Shall we drink to that?

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THE HINDU ELEMENT IN "FOUR QUARTETS"

K. RADHA

DURING his second stay at Harvard Eliot applied himself to the ancient philosophy of India, reading Sanskrit and Pali. He studied Patanjali's metaphysics. The philosophical gain was meagre, but a great awareness of Indian thought and sensibility is seen in his poetry. The influence of the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Upanishads* is frequently felt by the reader of *Four Quartets*: Eliot calls the *Gita* "the next greatest philosophical poem to the *Divine Comedy* within my experience".¹ The Vedantic doctrine of "wholism" is behind this poem :

Aum—this syllable is the whole world. Its explanation is : The past, the present and the future—all this is only the syllable Aum. And whatever also there is that transcends the three fold time that too is only the syllable Aum. (*Māndūkya-Upanishad*)²

and

what sorrow, what delusion, can there be to him who has perceived this oneness ? (*Isāvāsya-upanishad*, 7)³

The "perception of the all-ness, the whole-ness, and the always-ness of the Universal spirit or Brahman" is described as "Poornam" or wholism in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad*, 5, 6, and 7.⁴

Patanjali whom Eliot studied mentions the "Eightfold path" which aims at the suppression of mental activity. But all Yoga is not passivity. Sree Krishna urges Arjuna to pursue the course of right action for freedom from activity is never achieved by abstaining from action. These ideas seem to be always in Eliot's mind when he wrote, especially, the first three Quartets. According to Patanjali, Yoga leads to union with the Brahman without divine interference but Eliot's Christian orthodoxy prevents him from accepting it completely.⁵

Let us now examine the Quartets in some detail. The "lotos" ('Burnt Norton' 1.36, p. 14) is a flower sacred to the Hindus. The

lotus is a symbol of heart while the sun is the symbol of knowledge. When the rays of the sun fall on the lotus, it blooms and thus its life is filled with joy. This joy is called "Ananda" or absolute bliss in Vedic literature. The man following the thrush into the garden and his forgetting the world is akin to the experience of Satyakama in the *Chchandogya Upanishad*—of how, lost in meditation, he perceived the unifying spirit in all beings.⁸ Eliot says, "...human kind/ Cannot bear very much reality", (II. 42-43, p. 14). Elizabeth Drew comments that these words

recall the passage in the *Bhagavad Gita* where Krishna at Arjuna's request reveals himself in his divine form. The glory and horror are so overwhelming that Arjuna cannot endure the revelation and begs the God to resume his incarnation as friend and fellow mortal.

Lord Krishna before He reveals Himself to Arjuna tells him that he will not be able to behold with his eyes alone and that He will give him divine eyes (*Bhagavad Gita*, XI, 8, p. 138). Arjuna who is frightened by the vision is filled with wonder and his hair stands on its end (Ibid, 14, p. 140).

The imagery of the wheel and the point (I. 62, p. 15) is common to Hindu, Greek, Persian, Buddhist and Christian thought. According to the *Gita* the Brahman is the unmoved and the moving. The *Gita* speaks also of the terrible wheel of rebirth and death. The Brahman is timeless. Our *karma* pursues us always but it can be controlled by a disciplined observance of Yogas. The end of Yoga is liberation and divine union and the annihilation of the individual, for Yoga means Yuj (to join). For this there should be "inner freedom from practical desire / The release from action and suffering..." (II. 70-71, p. 16). This idea is repeated in the other Quartets also.

The concept of the dark night of the soul in Section III of 'Burnt Norton' is to be found in the *Gita*:

That which is night to all beings, in that the self-controlled man wakes; where all beings are awake, that is the night for the Muni (sage) who sees, (II. 69, p. 46)

Eliot's account of the darkness of the soul again in 'East Coker' (II. 112-113, p. 27) recalls the doctrine of the Ultimate Void of the Vedas. The "disaffection" ('Burnt Norton', I. 90, p. 17) is what the

Katha Upanisad describes as the darkness of ignorance and conceit in which the literate and the illiterate alike are led astray.⁸

The day and night in the first section of 'East Coker' suggest birth and death and also beginning and end. The whole cosmos emerges from the unmanifest during the Creator's day-time, only to merge back into the same Unmanifest during His night.⁹ In the opening lines the poet speaks of the dissolution of the whole universe when "the sun and the moon go down" (l. 62, p. 25) and the world becomes an ice-bound waste stretching endlessly. In the *Gita* as I have mentioned earlier we have the Creator's night when all the manifested creation is absorbed into the unmanifest (*Bhagavad Gita*, VIII, 18 and 19, p. 109). Eliot says that "the only wisdom we can hope to acquire/Is the humility: humility is endless". When Arjuna asks Lord Krishna what wisdom is and what it is that is worth knowing (*Bhagavad Gita*, XIII) Krishna mentions Humility as one of the attributes of Wisdom (Ibid, 7, p. 165).

The mind is "conscious but conscious of nothing..." (l. 122, p. 28); this is similar to the state of dreamless sleep called "Sushupti" in which the mind is quiescent.¹⁰ The idea that possession is possible only through dispossession (ll. 140-141, p. 29) is found in several chapters of the *Bhagavad Gita*. "For us, there is only the trying. The rest is not our business" (l. 181, p. 31) is reminiscent of the *Bhagavad Gita* (II. 47, p. 40, IV. 14, p. 63 and 20, p. 65). This idea is repeated in 'The Dry Salvages'. It is the union of Soul and God or Yoga that is most important, (see *Bhagavad Gita* IV). Our release from sickness depends on our surrender to God's Grace; "Abandoning all duties take refuge in Me alone; I will liberate thee from all sins." (*Bhagavad Gita* XVIII, 66, p. 221). We must be "still and still moving" (l. 204, p. 32) "anticipates the interest which Eliot shows in 'The Dry Salvages' and elsewhere in the *Bhagavad Gita* doctrine of the Yoga of action".¹¹

In the third of the *Four Quartets* 'The Dry Salvages' (which according to Donald Davie is "rather a bad poem", sticking out among the rest "like a sore thumb"¹²) the Hindu element is more in evidence than in the other Quartets.¹³ In "the river is within us, the sea is all about us" (l. 15, p. 36) the river is the life-time of an symbol of eternity. This is the Vedantic principle of identity-cum-individual and sea, the difference, as also the concept of unity-in-

diversity, often illustrated with the help of the river and the sea symbol. This idea is expressed in the *Mundakopantshad* III. 2, 8:

As the flowing rivers disappear in the ocean losing the name and form, go to the divine purusha higher than the high.¹³

Grover Smith says:

"Together the river and the sea allude to the Hindu parable of the life cycle—the drop of water lifted as vapour from the sea, deposited as rain upon the Himalaya, and carried again seaward by the Ganges."¹⁴

David Ward remarks that the lines, "...time counted by anxious worried women / Lying awake, calculating the future," II. 39-40, p. 37, plead for a "stoic withdrawal from suffering which in some ways resembles / more the Hindu or the Buddhist ways...than the more usual Christian interpretations of the virtues of faith, hope and love".¹⁵

The concepts of renunciation (I. 61, p. 37) and "unattached devotion" (I. 63, p. 38) are common to Hindu and Buddhist religions. The "agony abides" (I. 114, p. 40) reminds us of the continuous agony of the Hindus and the Buddhists. The Hindu holds the crisis of doubt which holds back Arjuna from taking part in the battle, the Buddhist repeats the grief of the sorrowing just as the Christian repeats the agony of Christ in the garden of Gethsemane.¹⁶

The description of time as both destroyer and preserver (I. 115, p. 40) brings to mind the Hindu "advaita" which sees the duality of time, the Gods Rudra (Siva the Destroyer) and Vishnu (the Preserver) reconciled in the singleness of Brahma the Creator. Reality, according to the ancient Indian philosophers, especially, Sankara, was one and spiritual, "Brahman". Brahman is timeless and so whoever seeks illumination must become oblivious to the passing of time:

I know Arjuna! all beings in the past, the present and the future, but no one knows Me (Bhagavad Gita, VIII. 26, p. 101).

The mention of Krishna in Section III of "The Dry Salvages" makes explicit the strain of Eastern philosophy adumbrated in *The Wasteland* and elsewhere in *Four Quartets*.¹⁷ The reference to Krishna at the beginning of the third section is a way of "indicating the Oneness of meaning which may resolve the many-ness of human experience".¹⁸

Lord Krishna who descends like Christ into the world of humanity advises Arjuna, the representative man who enters the battlefield—an image of the strife of life—and hesitates to fight for he sees his close relations among his enemies. Krishna, Arjuna's Charioteer, exhorts him to act without passion, without any attachment, without thinking of the fruits of action.²⁰ Arjuna is told that He is "the beginning, the middle and also the end of all beings" (*Bhagavad Gita* X. 20, p. 128) which is reminiscent of "I am the Alpha and the Omega, I am the beginning and the end" (Book of Revelation). The paradox of time in the opening lines of the third section seems to be Krishna's meaning. (See also *Bhagavad Gita* II and VIII).

The Way of Affirmation and the Way of Negation are one way : "And the way up is the way down, the way forward is the way back" (I. 129, p. 41). In the *Gita* we have the alternative ways of knowledge or contemplation and action. The idea that the wise see knowledge and action as one and that by taking either path we reach the same end recurs in Chapters II, III and V. We come across this belief again in the fifth section of 'The Dry Salvages'. Following Krishna, Eliot exhorts us to "Fare forward" (I. 137, p. 41) "not escaping from the past / Into different lives or into any future" (II. 137-8). The process of living and dying are one and the same, the whole drama is in each and every moment²⁰ and there is further reference to the doctrine of the *Gita* that "the object of contemplation determines the succession of being or comes to function in the following being".²¹

If one can regard past and future "with an equal mind" (I. 154, p. 42) which is described as "evenness of mind" in the *Bhagavad Gita* (II. 48, p. 40) in detachment from all backward regret and forward hope and accept the present as containing both past and future, then one can receive the truth which validates the voyage through time. This truth is expressed by Krishna. Every moment is the time of death ("And the time of death is every moment", I. 159, p. 42) and the realization of this thought is man's only fruitful action. The man at death goes to that sphere of being on which his mind is then intent. (II. 156-8, p. 42). In the *Bhagavad Gita* Krishna tells Arjuna :

And whoso leaving the body, goes forth remembering Me alone at the time of death, he attains My being; there is no doubt about this (VIII, 5, p. 105), and

Whosoever at the end leaves the body, thinking upon any being, to that being only he goes; O Kaunteya (O son of Kunti) (because) of his constant thought of that being (VIII, 6, p. 105).

"And the time of death is every moment" (I, 159) can be interpreted in two ways. (1) Death can claim us any moment (2) Dr. Achuthan gives a metaphysical meaning of the line. A moment is a unit of time. It is the phenomenon between the rising and falling of a single thought. Thus time is when thoughts rise and fall wave upon wave on the surface of the mind.

This vibration, *Sankalpa*, is the mind's natural characteristic just as motionableness is the characteristic of the sea ... The non-vibrant state of the mind—mindlessness—is the timeless Brahman like the waveless sea which is the sum of all waves as also their sources and substratum.²²

According to the Upanishads, with the first vibration, the mind and the whole universe, its creation, emerge from Brahman and, with the mind free from its smallest and subtlest vibrations, the universe merges in Brahman.²³ Thus from the metaphysical point of view Krishna's admonition of Arjuna to keep the mind fixed on God or Brahman and thus keep it free from vibrations is another way of asking him to arrest the process of creation—the cycle of birth, death and rebirth. Dr. Achuthan says that it is the return to the source of time, before the birth of moment, which is the state of mindlessness.²⁴

The advice of the poet to fare forward without thinking of the fruits of action (II, 162-3, p. 42) is also Krishna's advice, e.g., in

Thy right is to work only; but never with its fruits; let not the fruit of action be thy motive, nor let thy attachment be for inaction. (II, 47, p. 40; see also III, 8, p. 50, 19, p. 53, 25, p. 54, IV, 19 and 20, p. 64, 23, p. 66.)

Life is a voyage on a tempestuous sea and the sea-symbol is very common in the *Bhāgavad Gītā* as in II, 67, p. 45 and II, 70, p. 46. The last two lines of this movement "Not farewell / But fare forward, voyagers" (II, 169-170, p. 42) once again echo the words of Krishna. These lines remind us of "You argue by results, as this world does" in *Murder in the Cathedral*. This Hindu doctrine

which is found also in Kipling's 'The Story of Muhammad Din' is mentioned by Eliot in 'To the Indians who Died in Africa' (1943).²⁵

According to Hindu theology there is a sequence of definite incarnations determined by the law of Karma. A man who after many births attains perfection reaches the supreme. Eliot does not completely accept this. Eliot perhaps had in mind the Heraclitean remark that "You cannot step twice into the same river, for other and yet other waters are ever flowing on". Each moment is dying and therefore (since time is never finished) is always in some sense a rebirth. Thus in Eliot there is a synthesis of Hindu and Heraclitean doctrines.

Helen Gardner thinks that the introduction of Krishna in section III is an "error" and it "destroys the poem's imaginative harmony".²⁷ Donald Davie writes that the third movement begins with Krishna "which sticks in the throat even of Dr Rajan."²⁸ According to Rajan

There is an unbridgeable gap between a religion that is built upon faith in an event by which the material world was not condemned but saved. It is in their view of history and the time process that Christianity and Hinduism are most irreconcilably opposed; the incarnations of Vishnu give no significance to history, as does the unique Incarnation of Christian belief... It is perhaps unkind to quote Mr. Eliot against himself, but he has owned that 'two years' study of Sanskrit, a "year in the mazes of Patanjali's metaphysics", left him "in a state of enlightened mystification".

That is the feeling that this passage leaves with me.²⁹

The poet refers to various means by which men peer into the past and future for guidance and comfort in section V. In the *Chchandogya Upanishad* through the dialogue between Narada and Sanatkumāra the futility of the science of portents, spirits, stars, snake-charming etc. is described.³⁰ The action advocated by Krishna leads to freedom from past and future. Those who lack this freedom run after mirages, make attempts to prove that there is "life beyond our planet".³¹ Man should act, toil, cultivate and set in order the land on which the yew tree grows—even though it is always near us, i.e. death is in every moment (ll. 229-234, p. 43). "Right action is freedom / From past and future also" (ll. 224-225) is an echo of the *Bhagavad Gita* (VI: 1 and 2, p. 81).

In the first section of 'Little Gidding' the poet speaks of the importance of prayer. Through prayer we can transcend both time

and space. According to Patanjali, 'dhyana' is the mind's identification with a single object of contemplation^{8,9} leading to 'Samadhi' in which state we forget the temporal world.

'Fire', which is a major symbol in 'Little Gidding', stands for renunciation as well as illumination attained by the practice of renunciation in the Vedas.^{9A} It is also an agent of purification in Hindu religion. Only through renunciation is liberation possible. "Detachment" (1: 152, p. 55) and "indifference" (1: 153, p. 55) alone will liberate us (See *Bhagavad Gita* II. 38 and 39, p. 38, 52, p. 41, 57, p. 43, XVIII, 49, 217). The man liberated is a Yogi.

Four Quartets is less specifically Christian than 'Ash Wednesday' or *Murder in the Cathedral*. A non-Christian mystic can feel just as much at home here as a Christian", says Robert Lea.^{9A} In *Four Quartets* Eliot brings together the primitive Gods, the Trinity, Sree Krishna and the Buddha. Without calling it a Christian poem, though the Christian element dominates the others, we may quote the words of Grover Smith that the Quartets, "a new *Essay on Man*, are the poetic jottings of a philosophy holding that the world is an organ of the divine purpose".^{9B} The final impression the poem leaves upon our minds is that it is the work of a scholarly liberal-minded religious man entirely free from all fanaticism.

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- [N.B. Since the publishers have not always been mentioned (e.g., notes 2, 9, 14, 21) the publishers' names have been deleted for the sake of uniformity.]
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THE ENCHANTED STONE : REFLECTIONS ON MODERN POETICS

D. K. BARUA

ON the occasion of the centenary celebration* of a poetess who did not fully qualify to enter into the magic circle of modern poetry, and whom recently a modern Indian poet has dismissed as 'disappointing', it would perhaps be relevant to make some scrutiny of the poetics by which we like or dislike poetry and with which we try to express ourselves when we attempt compositions of our own. These principles of modern poetics have evolved through the experiments of various poets right from the middle of the nineteenth century. A great flood of creative energy rushed through America in the writings of Walt Whitman. A poet who thought he had started everything *de novo*, divesting himself of all poetic attitudinising, and spoke from the centre of his self to the hearts of all men :

What is known I strip away...

I launch all men and women forward with me into the Unknown.¹

Whitman was the symbol of the new man, his poem *Leaves of Grass* was aptly hailed by Michael Rossetti in 1868 as the modern poem *par excellence* ; a poem in revolt against all the sanctified notions of genteel society. But Whitman's attitude was not exactly one of hostility to this world ; 'afoot with (his) vision', he thought he would be able to sway the world towards him :

I turn the bridegroom out of bed and stay with the bride myself,

And tighten her all night to my thighs and lips.

This toughness and vitality and outspokenness of expression and his self-conscious 'barbaric yawp over the roof of the world' are however

* This essay was presented in an International seminar held in New Delhi in February, 1980, to mark the birth-centenary of Sarojini Naidu.

only one side of the enigmatic personality of Whitman. There is a mystic darkness in the heart of his apparently illuminated poem :

I but advance a moment only to wheel and hurry back in the darkness.

The strength of *Leaves of Grass* depends as much on this strategy as on its bravado of generalisations. Whitman said himself that there was something *furtive* in his nature like on old hen :

You see a hen wandering up and down a hedgerow, looking apparently quite unconcerned, but presently she finds a concealed spot, and furtively lays an egg, and comes away as though nothing had happened !... I think there are truths which it is necessary to envelop or wrap up. (Carpenter : *Days with Walt Whitman*, 1906, p. 43)

And Whitman did wrap up his vision though outwardly it looked all broadcast on the surface. In fact it was this constant interplay of darkness and light, this deliberate exercise in chiaroscuro, which enriched his vision and endeared him to the modern critics, in spite of his 'barbaric yawp' and tiresome prolixity.

Baudelaire is another mid-nineteenth century figure who has contributed immensely to the growth of modern poetics. Being something of a spiritual exile, he could not be expansive or all-inclusive like Whitman ; nor did he believe that he could transmute the utilitarian ugliness of his age. But he had faith enough in the 'superlative majesty of artifice',³ which, he thought, would bridge with its 'correspondences' the eternal and the contingent, 'proving thus the absence of materialism in their soul'.⁵ Baudelaire in fact created new possibilities of art by mapping the awareness of the metropolitan underworld where the spiritual and the sordid commingled. Rimbaud called him 'le premier voyant—the first seer, king of poets, a real god'.⁴ But he found fault with his master for living in too artistic a circle, for which he thought Baudelaire fell short of the final commitment : 'Inventions from the unknown need new form'. Baudelaire was too spiritual to sever his connection totally with the past, or to break the moulds of form and syntax to embody an anarchic vision. It was Rimbaud who nailed the cross of martyrdom on the heart of the poet with his injunction to be absolutely modern. Rimbaud charted out a course for the modern poet to arrive at the

unknown; and that was 'to make his soul monstrous by the disordering of all his senses, of pursuing all experiences of love, suffering and madness. Baudelaire was not unaware of such experiences but he shrank from it for the benefit of art. Such solitary delights, he thought, "made the individual useless to mankind, and made society unnecessary to the individual"'.⁵ A situation which would bring the artist 'nearer to the glittering abyss in which he will gaze upon the face of Narcissus'. (Quennell: 1956, p. 104). The health and resilience of Baudelaire's poetry rested mostly on this refusal to turn his back on life. But the other side of his poetic pursuits, the consecration of the art of poetry, gave rise to the symbolist movement, and inspired the new aesthetics of the nineties. Baudelaire was greatly inspired by Edgar Allan Poe and his ideal of the beautiful. He admired Poe's poetry for its enticing dream-like quality and its crystal-like perfection. He pointed out, however, that such achievements were the outcome of deliberate craftsmanship; he added that Poe 'sharpened his genius as a practitioner' and prided himself on 'hiding spontaneity and on simulating cold deliberation'.⁶ Yet Poe was one of the most inspired among poets. Baudelaire thought that he learned from the American poet the one basic lesson that one must not leave anything to chance. In fact, "there is no *minutiae* in matters of arts", Baudelaire declared.⁷

The other poet whom Baudelaire held up as an ideal was also a master of style! Theophile Gautier, who was 'a writer in the highest sense of the word',⁸ because he did not spare any pains in fulfilling the obligations of his calling. Gautier showed a knowledge of the language that was never at fault. Further, there is in Gautier's style, 'a precision that delights, astonishes and calls to mind the miraculous effect produced in gaming by a profound knowledge of mathematics'.⁹ This is the mastery of deliberation and naturalness that modern poets aim at, at their best. To quote the memorable lines of Yeats in 'Adam's Curse':

I said, 'A line will take us hours may be;
Yet if it does not seem a moment's thought,
Our stitching and unstitching has been naught.

Yeats however threw those lines rather spitefully at the world but

there was no spite behind Gautier's doctrine. In fact, so great was his conscious power of articulation, that, according to Baudelaire, for him, 'the inexpressible did not exist'. Yet for every poet, the writing of a poem must be a struggle, 'a raid on the inarticulate'. From such experience has evolved the modern conviction that 'a great deal, in the writing of poetry... must be conscious and deliberate'. (Eliot, *S.W.*, 1960, p. 58)

What is more important in the aesthetics of Baudelaire is that he draws a distinct line between the sensibilities of the heart and those of the imagination. Baudelaire says:

The feelings that flow from the heart are not necessarily propitious to poetic creation. Excessive sensibility of heart may even be harmful in this context.¹⁰

The seat of poetry is not the heart, but the imagination. And imagination is more allied to intelligence and taste, rather than to feelings and morality.

The heart is the source of love, the heart is the source of self-sacrifice, of crime; the imagination alone contains poetry.

(*Ibid.* p. 269)

Imagination is a faculty 'to select, judge, compare, eschew some things, seek out others, all with speed and spontaneity'. (*Ibid.* p. 270). This bifurcation of heart and imagination, of personal emotion and art emotion, had a far-reaching impact on the development of poetry in the twentieth century. The modern Indian poet whom I quoted in the beginning of this essay says this on Sarojini Naidu:

Prosodically her verse is excellent; as poetry, it disappoints. In spite of her having pumped enough feeling into them, the poems invariably have trouble in getting started.¹¹

Shall we say that the verses do not become poems because Mrs. Naidu pumps too much feeling into them? or, by analogy, that Mrs. Naidu failed as she only relied on feelings to elevate them into poetry? This is a criticism which originates in the tradition of Eliot. In discounting poets, Eliot often spoke of 'structural emotion', 'art emotion', approvingly, but rejected personal emotion. 'Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion but an escape from emotion', is one of his famous utterances. He has even affirmed:

The more perfect the artist the more completely separate in him will be, the man who suffers and the mind which creates.¹²

The distinction again is between the heart that feels or suffers and the mind that carries on the complex permutation and combinations within itself while standing completely separate from the agent which participates in the world of experiences and events. Distrust of emotion has thus become a hall-mark of modern poetics.

Baudelaire, as Rimbaud rightly said, was a seer, but he was also the pioneer in glorifying a dilettantism in the art of poetry by raising refinement of technique and formal beauty of verse to an exclusive and primal concern. 'The loudly trumpeted doctrine of the indissoluble union between beauty, truth and goodness', Baudelaire declares, 'is philosophical nonsense' and 'a jargon of lunacy'. (*Selected Writings*: 1972 p. 255) T. S. Eliot's comment on Keats's beauty-truth equation is also equally unequivocal. Eliot says :

This line strikes me as a serious blemish on a beautiful poem ; and the reason must be either that I fail to understand it, or that it is a statement which is not true.

(Brooks : 1947 p. 139)

'Not being able to understand' is Eliot's critical urbanity, ; the judgement is clear. The tirades of Baudelaire and Eliot are not simply a reaction against the so called 'heresy of didacticism', condemned by Baudelaire,¹³ but an expression of their more general disapproval of 'arguments' in poetry. This leads to the conclusion that poetry is not concerned with ideas as *notions* and poets should not think out for themselves a philosophical world-view of their own. They can only submit to available systems and bring ideas into poetry as something *perceived*. To leave a philosophy behind is no achievement for a poet. In fact, it appeared to Eliot that Blake wasted his talent trying to do so. The ideal was that of Flaubert. In the language of his cherished critic Remy de Gourmont :

Flaubert incorporated all his sensibilities into his work. He decanted himself drop by drop down to the dregs into his books. (Eliot, S. W. ; 1960 p. 139)

This distillation of one's experience 'goutte à goutte', the transmutation of things to their essence, became a major criterion of

approval in modern poetics. This is something Eliot learnt from the French symbolists. Mallarmé announced it in the beginning of his career in 1868 as 'a novel type of poetics' : 'Paint not the thing but the effect it produces'.¹⁴ W. B. Yeats relayed it in England in 1898 and so did Arthur Symonds. A type of poetry came into being where description or narrative of any kind was to be avoided, and the poem was to be 'presented' through juxtaposition of images rather than by logical arguments. The overall achievement is the triumph of technique over inspiration, of artistry over genius. Eliot makes the point quite straightforwardly :

England has produced a prodigious number of men of genius and comparatively few works of art... (*S.W.* p. 140)

A great artist, according to Eliot, is he who achieves a mastery of technique and is able to transvase drop by drop his total experience of life into art. But the smell of raw life must not be there. This was the archetypal symbolist dream of creating an equivalence of life in an artifice, to concentrate all into a book, "The eminent dignity of poetry outside of which there is only chance".¹⁵ To be sure, this is another kind of martyrdom in art ; Eliot recommended it in an early essay in his characteristic American idiom :

The arts insist that a man shall dispose of all that he has, even of his family tree, and follow art alone. (*S.W.* : 1960, p. 32)

When this sense of martyrdom to technique is there, when the high pressure of life in the process of transvasement 'goutte à goutte' is there, we invariably have great art. But without that one finds only the empty shells of technique.

Modern poetry, when it began in the mid-nineteenth century, was a vehicle of new consciousness ; the poets wanted to record as Rimbaud put it 'the unknown awakening in the universal soul'¹⁶ of their time. But in the course of its progress through the later half of the nineteenth century and the experience of the early decades of the twentieth, it lost its fluidity and hardened into an enchanted stone of technique, and the poets began to dance round and round it as the world increasingly left them alone. How this has all happened is a part of literary history, and it is not the object of this paper to investigate it.

'Paint not the thing, but the effect it produces' is a doctrine which needs the terrifying mystical experiences of a Mallarmé to back up. At a lower level, the level say of a competent artist, as with Swinburne, to quote Eliot, 'the object ceased to exist', that is, the world of reality disappears. As a result meaning in a poem becomes merely 'a hallucination of meaning', because language survives in such work without the props of things, like parasites in the air, adapting itself 'to an independent life of atmospheric nourishment'.¹⁷ The aesthetics of modern poetry is largely an exercise in analysing how such atmospheric nourishment is possible within a poem or any work of art, for that matter. We talk about image structure, the structure of emotion, rhythmic pattern, ritual gestures, to prop up a vision of things without the things, or, a state of mind without any presence of the objects that originate it. It is obviously a complex art and must be obscure, and its success depends on the subtle use of language: subtle like that of Mallarmé with 'immaculate words unsoiled by any common meaning': or, as Yeats put it, 'as subtle, as complex, as full of mysterious life as the body of a flower or of a woman'¹⁸. or, a language which Eliot held up as desirable, embodying, *a struggle to digest and express* (my emphasis) new objects, new groups of objects, new aspects, new feeling¹⁹, but almost with a wearied cry of despair at not being on top of things and admitting philosophically, as Eliot did in one of his poems, that 'every attempt' is a 'different kind of failure' (C.P. p. 202). The profound *struggle* for realising new depth of human consciousness thus ends in a bitter struggle with words with a deadening self-consciousness of the medium. A great artist like Eliot at least cries over his failures; the minor ones pass them off as masterpieces.

One may be permitted to generalise and say that the struggle to be modern, which began with Whitman as a search for the uniqueness of self, has, in a way, ended as a search for *bons mots*, or *mots justes*, the right words. The search for spiritual correspondences, which was the heart of Whitman and Baudelaire's experiments in poetry, could have given great vitality to modern literature. But Baudelaire's language smacked of religion and Whitman was too sociologically expansive to survive in the aesthetic hothouse of the nineties. The poets, on the other hand, found that the spiritualising aspect of their message was only realisable through music. So the

symbolist idea of giving poetry the suggestiveness of music caught on. And to arrive at the mysterious suggestiveness, the poets extolled the ways of distortions of language and had resort to the wilful complexities of utterance. Some distortion of language is of course inevitable in poetic language but what has become current now is a self-conscious virtuosity of style. Symbolists recommended tricks of diction and syntax to the initiates : As did Verlaine in 'Art Poétique' :

Also you must not forget to choose
Your words with some confusion.
There is no better song than the one
Where the precise joins the obscure.

This deliberate search for obscurity added to the dilettantic spirit of the age and inwardly paralysed the search of spiritual correspondences extolled by Baudelaire. Eliot knew that the language of poetry is not derived through tricks but through mortal battle with words and 'every poem is an epitaph' (*C.P.* p. 221). But this self-conscious martyrdom to technique, or in Hopkin's words, the spectre of perishing in the gullies to the Parnassus, only helps to shift the struggle of art to the periphery of human consciousness.

Eliot was right in condemning the poets of the nineties for their failure in acquiring depth and intensity of vision ; both Pound and Eliot put up for mild ridicule the protagonists of the nineties in their presentation of the characters of Mauberly and Prufrock, respectively. The development of Eliot's own poetry shows that he maintained a desperate struggle within himself to serve both the temporal and the eternal claims of art, but his criticism was contaminated with polemics. He wrongly generalised on most questions about Romanticism and sought to place himself as a classicist. He surely had Watts-Dunton and others of his kind in mind when he said :

Romanticism is a short cut to the strangeness without the reality and it leads its disciples only back upon themselves (*S.W.* p. 31).

The great Romantics of the nineteenth century never suffered from such delusions. Strangeness was a cherished ideal of the nineties and was strongly recommended in Baudelaire's poetics : "Beauty has always an element of strangeness" (*Selected Writing* : p. 119),

Baudelaire insisted time and again. But strangeness without reality would be vacuous. "You have no right to despise the transitory fleeting elements", (*Ibid*, p. 403), Baudelaire reminded, as without that you have an emptiness of an abstract and undefinable beauty. Eliot echoes Baudelaire again when he says that such short cuts will only lead the poets back to themselves in the image of Narcissus looking at himself in the abyss. But if the nineties devitalised their art by abandoning the contingent reality—is not Eliot's poetry equally weakened by its obsessive obliquity? Is it not true that by indicting the direct use of personal emotion and personal experience in poetry he threw the baby with the bath water, and, emptied the world of poetry, his own, as well as that of his age, of great vitality? By surface manipulation of words and image, allusiveness, suppression of logical links and the discarding of narrative structure, has not the modern poet created a mirror of art to reflect only the virtuosity of style? Is it not one of the reasons why modern poetry, in spite of its heroic endeavour to embody the essence of the spirit of man and his age, has alienated the modern man from the precincts of poetry. Ours is perhaps the only age where people have learnt to live uninspired and unconsolated by poetry.

A young man trying to write poetry in our age has to learn to come in presence of the muse almost in fancy dress; such is the power of the great tradition, that he must learn to hide his spontaneity and learn to simulate cold deliberation of maturity. So much so that from our poetic world 'admiration, enthusiasm, devotion, love' have nearly disappeared. These are some of the qualities Newman enumerated as the primal and perennial qualities associated with the poetical imagination. The human mind is ruled as much by instinct as by the encrusted opinion of the age. A young man learns his trade within the encapsuled environment of current aesthetics. The modern tradition, seems to affirm that there is no room for sincere emotion in poetry and that "the difference between art and the event is always absolute" (*S.W.* p. 56); that the poetic emotion derives itself from the structural atmospherics of the poem and not from the poet's experience of life or the objective world; that honesty of feeling cannot have any meaning without technical accomplishment; that bathing thought with personal feeling is wrong; in fact thought itself is an alien element in poetry; Eliot remarks elsewhere, 'James

had a mind so fine that no idea could violate it' (Dupee : 1947, p. 125). These pronouncements constitute more less the foundations of modern poetics. But are not these attitudes impoverishing both poetry and life in our time ? While discussing modern tradition, I am aware that W. B. Yeats has come up in the estimation of the critics of the post-second-world-war generation, and his influence has been an important factor in the growth of poetry in the fifties and the sixties. The Beat group of poets in the fifties have brought Whitman back to the supermarket as a positive influence. But it is also dangerous to develop the idea that one must have a spectacular, vital, or, flamboyant life to pump these qualities into poetry and that poetry is nothing but a dramatized or idealised expression of personality.

The proper answer to the problem, it seems to me, is to demythologize the whole idea of modernism, and, to teach ourselves in a non-attitudinizing way to submit to experience and to struggle to attain the transparency of the world of objects and events. The masks of impersonality have not only hidden the vital world from us, they have also distorted our views of ourselves. The acknowledged masters of our age have broadly emphasized the mastery of the world through technique and this impulse for mastery is what they have caught from the age of science. The phrases by which they tried to express their art or technique were often derived from scientific experiments but the real instinct of the poetical mind is not one of mastery but of immersion, not one of domination but submission. In Hopkins's poetry we have such a realisation ; but the over-elaboration of his technical experiments, which endeared him to the modern critics, obscured the truth of his real insight. The pure statement of this ideal we find in Newman's *Historical Sketches* (Vol. 2, pp. 386-388) :

"we should not put ourselves above the objects but at their feet ; that we should feel them to be above us and beyond us, that we should look up to them and that instead of fancying that we can comprehend them, we should take for granted that we are surrounded and comprehended by them ourselves".

The poet in this sense is truly a medium but not a passive or inert medium. W.B. Yeats has put it admirably "The poet confesses

to life what he would do if he were young, beautiful and rich, and life answers : 'I could never have thought of all that myself. I have so little time'. And it is our praise that it goes upon its way with shining eyes forgetting us."²⁰ The poet thus brings self-awareness to life ; the poet is not to be a filament of platinum but a conscious vehicle of consciousness.

I know it is possible to think that this is all rhetoric ; that a poet does not choose to do what he does ; the age demands or rather imposes certain qualities of vision from which none can escape. I do not however like to subscribe to the lore that human consciousness has become totally different in our age, that the human sensibilities have been irretrievably changed by the noise of the gasoline engine. At least in the heart of India such utterances will never receive any credence. But we don't need to be apologetic either ; in support of my submission I would like to quote a learned Oxford professor who had done yeoman's service by silently upholding a dissenting voice throughout his illustrious career. I mean Professor Bateson who died only recently ; he wrote in 1966 :

If it is objected that the society in which we live today is very different from that, for example, of the Renaissance, and that our canons of criticism cannot always allow us to endorse as 'good' now what was 'good' then, the reply will be that human nature and human institutions do not change as much as they seem to do to the casual eye, and to be able to detach oneself occasionally from the biases of our century is one of the objects of a humane education. (Bateson : op. cit, p. 19)

I think that the last phrase 'the object of a humane education' is forceful enough to enlist our sympathy for a rethinking to break the mould of encrusted opinion on modernism and release the living spring of life to flow as it listeth, to nourish new art consonant with the needs of new consciousness.

NOTES

1. All quotations from Whitman are from 'Song of Myself', unless otherwise stated.
2. 'The Painter of Modern Literature', (Quennell : 1956, p. 53)
3. *Idem*
4. All Quotations from Rimbaud are from *Rimbaud* (The Penguin Poets : O. Bernard, 1962).
5. 'The Poem of Hashish' (Quennell ; 1956, p. 104)
6. 'Further Notes on Edgar Poe' *Selected Writings*, Penguin Classics 1972, p. 206
7. *Idem*
8. 'Theophile Gautier', *Selected Writings*, 1972, p. 271
9. *Selected Writings*, 1972, p. 272
10. *Ibid*, p. 270
11. R. Parthasarathy's Introduction to *Ten Twentieth Century Indian Poets*, 1976, p. 3
12. Eliot, *Sacred Wood*, 1960, pp. 54-58
13. *Selected Writings*, 1972, p. 260
14. Hartley, Anthony (Ed.) *Mallarmé*. Penguin Poets, 1965, p. IX
15. *Ibid*, p. XXV
16. Oliver Bernard (Ed.), *Rimbaud*, Penguin Poets, 1962, p. 13
17. Eliot's essay on 'Swinburne' in *S.W.*, pp. 148-150
18. 'The Symbolism of Poetry', *Essay and Introductions*, 1961, p. 164
19. *Sacred Wood* p. 150
20. *Autobiographies* 1955, p. 475

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2. Edward Carpenter : *Days With Walt Whitman*, London, 1906
3. Peter Quennell (Ed.) : *Baudelaire : The Essence of Laughter & Other Essays*, New York, 1956
4. P. E. Charvet (Ed. & Tr.): *Baudelaire : Selected Writings on Art & Artists*, (Penguin), 1972
5. T. S. Eliot : *Collected Poems* (1909-1962), Faber, London, 1963 (Abbreviated. C. P.)
6. do : *Sacred Wood*, 1960. Abbreviated. S. W.

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9. O. Bernard (Ed.) : *Rimbaud*, Penguin Poets, 1962
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11. Cleanth Brooks : *The Well Wrought Urn*,
Harcourt, New York, 1947
12. Anthony Hartley (Ed.) : *Mallarmé*, Penguin Poets, 1965.
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E. M. FORSTER'S *HOWARDS END* : THE OPENING CHAPTER

SURABHI CHAKRABARTI

I

THE first chapter of E. M. Forster's *Howards End* is composed of three letters written by Helen Schlegel from the house called Howards End (in Hertfordshire, near London, as we gather later) to her sister Margaret in London. The letters are preceded by just one introductory sentence of the narrator. This opening sentence of the novel is of some interest :

One may as well begin with Helen's letters to her sister.

This is a very simple-looking sentence, and, ordinarily, we would not pause to consider its implications. Some of the implications, when stated explicitly, may appear to be quite banal, and, therefore, unworthy of serious attention.

Modern Stylistics, however, impels our close attention to a sentence like this. It is a reasonable hypothesis that the first sentence of a novel is likely to be of importance. That hypothesis may not be confirmed by the first sentence of each and every novel. Close analysis of every such first sentence may not be fully rewarding. Forster's first sentence in this novel, however, does promise rewards.

The implications of this first sentence of the novel may be stated in the following manner. The reader is being informed :

1. That the reader is about to hear a narrative.
2. That what follows this sentence is the beginning of the narrative ; this beginning will be a number of letters.
3. That the narrative will have a character in it who is named Helen ; that Helen has a sister ; that the letters which follow are Helen's letters to that sister.

So far we are at the level of elementary comprehension-tests. The focus is on the segment '*begin with Helen's letters to her sister*', and

this is the segment that is of importance at this level of communication. At this level the language, inviting primary attention to the subject-matter, fulfils what has been called 'the referential function'.¹ Linguistics, in general, tends to be more concerned with language at this level.

But the implications of that sentence do not end there. It has other implications too. The reader is also being told :

4. That the narrator is exercising a choice about where to begin ; but he is unemphatic about his choice ; he is not asserting that the choice which he has made is the only correct choice ; he is, rather, suggesting that the narrative might have been begun at some other point as well : ('One may as well begin...').
5. That the narrator is one who knows the whole story ; (it is only because he knows the whole story that he can say 'One may as well begin with...') ; that the events of the story are of a past time, have reached a conclusion, have acquired the shape of a narrative with a beginning and an end.
6. That the narrator has not only chosen a beginning, but he has also chosen a mode of narration ; that in this narrative the narrator's voice will be heard from time to time, and instead of only 'presenting' the story, the narrator will be likely to guide the reader, providing helpful comments and explaining motives and revealing inner thoughts.

Stylistics, as a means of 'linking literary criticism and linguistics'², would be more concerned with 4-6 above, and its focus would be rather on the first segment of the sentence— '*One may as well begin with...*'. Language in this segment is fulfilling certain other functions in addition to the referential. For instance, using Roger Fowler's terms again³, we may say that—

- (a) Language here fulfils a *phatic* function. The cool unemphatic tone, the relaxed manner, and the use of the indefinite impersonal pronoun 'One' establish a relation between the narrator and the reader, a relation to ensure unhurried leisurely response. The reader is also quietly and tacitly assured of a narrator who will be reliable, being in the know of everything that happened.

- (b) The use of language here is also *expressive*, the focus being on the narrator. The narrator is not only speaking and giving information, he is also expressing himself, establishing himself as a particular sort of person—unemphatic, detached, unhurried. We hear a distinct voice, the voice of the narrator.

We have not yet exhausted the implications of that one sentence. It has more information for the reader, when considered as a specifically 'literary' sentence, a constituent unit in a work of literary art. The literariness of the sentence includes the functions so far mentioned—these functions are subsumed, not set aside, in the specifically literary style. But literary style has an additional dimension, a dimension created by many factors including literary devices and conventions of literary art.

This next stage of our examination of the sentence leads to the following observations :

- (c) Stylisticians have usually chosen what are called 'deviant' sentences to locate and demonstrate literariness.⁴ The sentence we are now considering, however, is not a 'deviant' sentence. It does not deviate from the grammar of ordinary discourse, it is not a linguistic 'oddity'. It is a quiet and ordinary sentence.
- (d) Yet, it is deceptive in its quiet tone and perfectly normal appearance. "One may as well begin with..." is a device. The implicit suggestion that this particular beginning has no particular merit is not what the reader is required to take seriously. The reader is rather expected to disbelieve this modest disclaimer of artistic sureness. If the novel be any good, the reader, at the time of reading the novel for the second or the third time, must enjoy this as a mild joke. The reader will see that the choice about the beginning of the novel was deliberately made by the author, who must have decided that this is the only appropriate beginning. The author then puts forward not himself as the speaker of this sentence, but a *persona* whom we call the narrator. The narrator may say many things for which the author would not be formally responsible. The narrator's voice may be a fictive voice.

Forster's first sentence, while appearing to be a real-life utterance framing the fictive world of the novel and introducing us to that fictive world, is itself a fictive utterance, not wholly factual. It is a product of literary style, it is a product of rhetoric.

Now, it would be a mistake if we think that this kind of literary style is to be found only in literary discourse, or only in written literature. Such sentences may often form part of the wit of ordinary conversation. Rhetoric is used by people in lively ordinary discourse too. The language of literature is never altogether dissociated from the language of ordinary life, and the language of ordinary life is constantly enriched by the language of literature.

- (e) Forster's narrator has not only presented and expressed himself in this first sentence, as we observed in (b) above. He has quite deliberately proclaimed the genre of this literary work. He has quietly, but firmly, announced that the narrator here is omniscient and will resort to 'intrusive discourse'.

In 1910, however, this was by no means the fashionable mode. Lionel Trilling's comment on the opening of this novel is pertinent :

'Forster takes full and conscious responsibility for his novels, refusing to share in the increasingly dull assumption of the contemporary novelist that the writer has nothing to do with the story he tells .. Like Fielding he shapes his prose for comment and explanation. He summarises what he is going to show, introduces new themes when and as it suits him'.⁵

Leo Spitzer, in a footnote, quotes this comment with approval :

'From the moment we open the book to the moment we put it down, we are given to understand that an almighty overlord is directing us, who leads us where he pleases.'⁶

In Forster's novel, the narrator reveals himself more than once. Expressions like 'my own' (Ch.IV, p. 38), 'I hope' (Ch. II, p. 27), "let me hasten to add", or, "It is not Margaret who is telling you about it" (Ch II. p. 27), "We are not concerned with the very poor" (Ch. VI, p. 58), "And the voice in the gondola rolled on, piping melodiously of Effort and Self-Sacrifice" (Ch. VI, p. 62), 'It is rather a moment when the commentator should step forward' (Ch. XI, p. 107), "Shortly before the move, our hero and heroine were married" (Ch. XXXI, p. 253),—are scattered throughout the novel.

II

At this point it seems necessary to consider the question of the narrative mode in some greater details. Literary style is determined by the mode used. It is equally true that the mode itself is a product of a particular style. Stylistics is concerned with literary discourse. Its unit of operation is not the sentence only. While it demands close attention to particular details, it cannot afford to lose sight of the whole. Genre, Mode, Plot, Structure are concepts which need not be peculiar to only structuralists. Stylisticians need not agree with all the views of all the structuralists (they differ among themselves) nor need they proceed in the directions taken by structuralism. But there is a common ground between structuralist poetics and stylistics which stylisticians value. It is not a coincidence that books on stylistics often put the two words 'Style' and 'Structure' together. [Cf. Roger Fowler, *'Style and Structure in Literature'*, Michael Riffaterre, *'Essais de Stylistique Structurale'*].

Structuralist literary critics are generally more concerned with Genre, Mode, Plot—structures of the whole. Stylisticians generally investigate parts—short poems, passages, segments. But stylistics makes use of the concepts and tools of structuralist analysis wherever they are relevant and useful.

The first sentence of 'Howards End' is a proclamation of the particular genre to which this work belongs. It is therefore obligatory for the analyst to consider the significance of this proclamation. Forster has chosen the omniscient narrative angle of vision quite deliberately. This choice involves many other decisions. These may be put together under the heading 'Authorial Stance' or 'Point of View'.

Authorial Stance or 'Point of View' : Having decided that the novel shall be of the type in which the author speaks and comments, the author has still to decide on the sort of distance that should be maintained between the author and the narrative. Should the author speak in his own voice, or should he invent a narrator-persona, not wholly identifiable as the author himself? Should the narrator be also an entirely fictive character and the novel a story-within-a story (as in some of the famous novels and tales of

Conrad with Marlowe as the narrator)? Having decided that there shall be a narrator other than the author, there still remains the question of distance between the narrator and the characters of the novel. Should we have a character in the novel who may be called 'the central consciousness' of the novel? The 'central consciousness' is not the narrator, but, in the nature of the case, the narrator will be very close to the 'central consciousness'; the distance between them will often be blurred or completely evaporated.

Authorial Stance has a direct impact on fictional style. The choice of 'point-of-view' is crucial in fiction. Several relevant questions arise in this process of transmission of the story to the reader—first, who talks to the reader?—the author in the third or the first person or the central character in the first? second, from what position does he tell the story—detached, periphery, centre, front, or shifting? third, what channels of information does the narrator use to convey the story to the reader?—the author's, or the character's words, thoughts and perceptions? and finally, at what distance does he place the reader of his story—close, distant, or shifting? The story can be narrated by the main character, involving a first person account of events, or it can be told by an observer-author as distinct from the omniscient or analytic author. The observer-narrator only shows what he observes. The analytic-omniscient narrator undertakes also to investigate, interpret and evaluate motives and feelings of the characters. He may also give his own comments on the entire "condition of man" in passages of what are known as 'intrusive discourse'. The control the novelist exercises on his readers depends ultimately on the stance, the point-of-view, the distance from the action, that the novelist adopts and the stance may be ambiguous, or shifting, or too rigid. The term 'point-of-view' can also be used in either of two senses—perspectives (internal and external), and attitudes.⁸ Also, the multiplicities of any literary text or even any utterance coalesce not in the writer but in the reader who gathers together, gleans in his reading of it, the many voices which constitute the text or the utterance itself. For instance, Henry James's excessive preoccupation with the focus of narration led him to attempt in his novels, a sort of "mutual irradiation" whereby the reader's mind is forced to hold to two levels of awareness: the story told and the story to be deduced. In later

Jamesian novels the represented world is filtered through the vision of a single central character who is at once both the subject and the viewpoint.

Therefore, the central problem of any narrative method concerns the relation of the author to his work ; in fiction, the most intriguing level of analysis is point-of-view, for there are so many subtle variations in the type of the narrator—first-person, third-person omniscient, a character as ‘sentient centre’ ; or a purely objective presentation. The essentials of the objective manner are the absence from the novel of the ‘omniscient novelist’ and the presence of a controlled point-of-view. ‘Point-of-View’, then, is not only the personal pronoun from which a story is narrated, it is the way in which a writer authenticates his material, offering enough room for variation. Thus, point-of-view provides a *modus operandi* in distinguishing the possible degrees of authorial extinction in the narrative art. Percy Lubbock was concerned with point-of-view as a means to a coherent and vivid presentation ; Mark Schorer takes it a step further, by examining the uses of ‘point-of-view’ “not only as a mode of dramatic delimitation, but more particularly, of thematic definition”, a part of the technique which ‘discovers and evaluates the subject-matter’.⁹

As an omniscient narrator the novelist must give the impression that the story happens naturally ; he does borrow, at times, the vision of one or another character and observes things from that person’s point-of-view ; at other times, the author is entirely responsible, commenting, abridging or taking a panoramic view. To a writer, this direct command of the story is the most pliable and privileged of all methods, for it enables him to make selective use of a number of individual points of view, borrowing a specific character’s angle of vision as the occasion requires. He can analyse anything in or about the story by use of critical comments and generalization, can easily give an account of apparently dissociated scenes and can also discover multiple traits and facets of the characters in a ready and plausible manner.

According to Forster, the novelist’s chief speciality is unhampered omniscience whereby he commands all the secret life and he must not be robbed of this privilege. Forster is not ‘awed by the sacred doctrine of the ‘point-of-view’¹⁰ ; he views the story from his

vantage point beyond time and place, from the centre, or the periphery or the front, from any or all angles at will. It is his belief that a writer should be free to shift viewpoint from character to his own omniscient or semi-omniscient position, wherever he desires ; the most important thing being his power "to bounce the reader into accepting what he says".¹¹ He employs this method of narration most brilliantly.

The opening line of *Howards End* which clearly presages this direct command over the story, can be contrasted with the opening lines of his *Room with a View* :

"The Signora had no business to do it"—said Miss Bartlett, "no business at all, she promised us South Rooms with a view close together, instead of which here are north rooms, here are north rooms, looking into a courtyard and a long way apart. Oh Lucy!"¹²

Here the omniscient teller borrows Miss Bartlett's point-of-view and only a few lines later he assumes the rôle of a narrator-commentator and writes :

"Miss Bartlett, though skilled in the delicacies of conversation, was powerless in the presence of brutality. It was impossible to snub anyone so gross."¹³

His first novel *Where Angels Fear to Tread* directly introduces the omniscient narrative mode ; *Longest Journey* opens in the middle of a debate amongst the Cambridge scholars and *A Passage to India* opens with a long descriptive passage.

The question of the form of narration involves the problem of distance which is again closely related to that of tone. The distance will determine the tone and it is essentially the tone which helps the reader to a finer awareness. The distance, or rather the stance the narrator adopts towards the action, dictates the tone of the novel. Walter Allen says—

"Tone is the verbal equivalent, the verbal embodiment of the novelist's point-of-view or narrative stance. ... The control the novelist exercises on his readers depends ultimately on the stance, the point of view, the distance from the action that the novelist adopts ; and on his tone, which is the verbal embodiment of stance, point of view, distance".¹⁴

It has already been pointed out that *Howards End* abounds in authorial intrusions and generalizations on life, civilization, and England. Whether these intrusions are organically related to the theme of the novel is a matter for investigation which we propose to take up later.

III

We may now examine the decision—‘*One may as well begin with Helen’s letters to her sister*’. Why does the author decide to open the novel with these letters? If we are to use the term ‘the central consciousness’, it should be applied to Margaret rather than to Helen, although Helen and Margaret together present a complex unity. Why then begin with Helen’s letters?

The moment we try to answer this question we begin to notice several points which are important, and are known to be important in the light of the whole novel. These letters are about the house Howards End. At one level of plot-summary it would not be wholly wrong to say that the story of the novel is ‘How Margaret Schlegel got the house Howards End’. It is not without significance that in the last chapter of the novel, very near the end, the novelist makes Dolly Wilcox say, ‘It does seem curious that Mrs. Wilcox should have left Margaret Howards End, and yet she got it, after all.’ (331)

It is the author’s design that Margaret should hear a great deal about the house, acquire certain feelings about it and become deeply associated with it, long before she really sees the house. She does not enter the house until chapter 23, that is, almost in the physical centre of the novel (the novel has 44 chapters). By that time she has heard about the house from Mrs. Wilcox also.

Now it is important for the novelist’s design that the novel should open with a description of the house. This might have been given in straightforward description by the narrator. But that would have meant a certain loss of the drama of feelings that are generated by the house in minds like those of Helen, or Mrs. Wilcox, or Margaret.

Helen seems to be the right person to tell Margaret about the house. The design requires Mrs. Wilcox to be very quiet, reticent and communicating in a very special non-verbal way. She cannot

be the person to talk much about the house to a stranger which is what Margaret remains to her until chapter 8. Helen, impetuous, 'over-expressive' as she herself says (p. 143), in deep personal relation of affection with Margaret, would be perhaps the only right person. It is intended that Margaret Schlegel to whom the letters are addressed, should form an idea about the house Howards End at the very outset. Only Helen and Mrs. Wilcox can impart this idea but Helen is the more appropriate reporter, and her letters marked by an immediacy and intensity of style and an intimate tone, enlighten Margaret about the house which she has to visit later and, ultimately, make her own.

But the author did not want the reader to take on trust everything said by Helen in the letters; due to the adoption of an epistolary narrative form, there is no mixing of tones, no authorial intrusion. The focus that he employs, requires the maintenance of a pronounced distance from the characters and their world. This focus, incidentally, is the basis of all his irony and also is central to his 'double vision' without which one can hardly identify the unique accents of the Forsterian voice. It is remarkable that in the opening chapter of the novel there is no shrinkage of distance between the narrator and the character. The interpolations, the character's comments which break up the flow of the epistles here, are marked by a highly personal, colloquial, racy, humorous, whimsical, even ironic style which prevents them from sounding artificial or contrived. The tone of Helen's letters, half-mocking, is essentially good-humoured.

The opening chapter can raise a few relevant questions in the reader's mind: for instance, what is gained by this beginning? —What does the personal conversational style of the letters ensure? Why does not the author employ a straight 'objective narrative' with an ordinary narrative sentence like: "When Helen Schlegel visited the Wilcoxes in their house called Howards End ..." and so on? In fact, as the epistolary narrative is better adapted to the presentation of personal relationships, the novelist's choice of the epistolary narrative in the opening chapter is deliberate. Forster intended to evoke the intimate and private effect of the letter form and by using the form only in the opening chapter and not anywhere else in the entire novel, he easily avoids the implausibility, the repetition and the prolixity of the epistolary narrative. This opening

affords him great flexibility of narrative approach as well as an extraordinary economy. It provides him with an adequate form for rendering the complete engrossment of the character's innermost feelings in most vibrant terms. The form is described as "instantaneous descriptions and reflections" by Richardson in his Preface to 'Clarissa'.

IV

We may now proceed to examine the main body of the opening chapter, that is, the three letters from Helen to Margret.

The letters read well, speeding the readers on to the story very quickly, equipped with the essential information. First, one sees the house ; the story begins with a letter written from Howards End and also comes to the end at the same place, enacting a complete cycle. Also the title of the novel should prepare the readers to notice that the house, named in the address of Helen's letter, is of importance. The first two sentences of Helen's first letter, are about the house. The first line tells us that the two sisters let their imagination play with the house but the real house is very different ; we are informed that the two sisters share a common world of jokes, fantasies and feelings. Here one has the first hints of the "particular language" the two sisters talk. The second sentence : "old and little, and altogether delightful"... gives us a hint of what they had imagined about the Wilcox values and their way of life. Their impression of the Wilcoxes led them to imagine a house 'new and big' and certainly not delightful. Helen writes in the second paragraph :

"Why did we settle that their house would be all gables and wiggles and their garden all gamboge-coloured paths ?" (19)

They evidently expected the house to be ugly in the showy gaudy manner of the *nouveau riches*.

The letter gradually builds up a vivid picture of the house—"the delightful red brick", 'the nine windows', 'the very big wych-elm', 'the house covered with vine', 'a greengage tree', 'the farmyard', 'the dog roses', 'a lovely house'.

Thus at the very beginning, the reader's attention is directed to the

house ; and in course of the action, the house is presented through Charles, through Mrs Wilcox, through Margaret Schlegel as she visits the place for the first time and is reminded of Helen's letters and, finally, through Helen herself towards the end of the novel as she reminisces over it and decides to camp there for a night. Even Mrs. Munt on her way to the house felt 'the hints of local life' which Helen's letters convey in this chapter of the novel.

The house is a surprise for Helen. In the light of our reading of the whole novel we may say that the shock of this surprise jolts her into a consciousness of the inadequacy or inaccuracy of her cultured view of life, and, attempting a revaluation of the Wilcoxes, she rushes headlong into a reversal of her attitudes and into submission to her idealized image of Wilcox-values. She does not know that the Wilcoxes do not belong to Howards End, she does not know about the Howards, she does not recognize the distinction of Mrs. Wilcox among the Wilcoxes.

The letters also give us glimpses of the Wilcoxes, Mrs. Wilcox, Mr. Wilcox and others ; a little of Margaret (her view of life being 'sometimes life' and 'sometimes only a drama'), a little of Tibby (...*'really Tibby is too tiresome, he starts a new mortal disease every month'*), and also a little of Mr. Munt (*'what a bore'*).

One also learns a great deal about Helen herself from the style of these letters. She is joyous, gay, whimsical, educated, sensitive, witty, with a sense of the comic as evident in the following lines :

"Presently he (Charles Wilcox) started sneezing and had to stop. Then I hear more clicketing, and it is Mr. Wilcox. practising, and then, 'a-tissue', 'a-tissue'; he has to stop too. Then Evie comes out.....and then she says 'a-tissue' and in she goes." [20]

The tone of the letters is mocking, self-mocking, impetuous, light-headed and articulate. Every line in the letters is alive, not a single dull line, not one stereotyped phrase unless in mocking. Evidently she can use a low phrase with great effect. While writing about the house, the sentences reveal her as a witty, cultivated girl, perhaps slightly snobbish. "We females are that unjust"—is again mocking, self-mocking and again unjust, because not all 'females' think like

these sisters, she is parodying some other's voice. These intimate letters to her sister also anticipate the later descriptions of her character as 'slightly hysterical', 'irresponsible and charming' or as one having 'the least balance' and 'the cruelty of youth'. In a word, she is an 'exceptional person' as Mrs. Munt describes her in the following chapter. Her request to burn the letters is also quite in accord with her nature which realises at the same time that the letters have been 'over-expressive'. Her varying gestures of love to various persons, provide yet another clue to her character, quite consonant with her way of falling in love with Paul, and viewed in the light of the whole novel, in a way, it accounts for her conduct with Leonard Bast. This liaison with Leonard has been criticised as 'unconvincing' or 'improbable'. But there is some indication of this impetuous and precipitous style of Helen in this first chapter. The sharp oscillation from slightly contemptuous and amused dismissal to the other extreme of unthinking admiration is notable.

These three letters in the opening chapter of the novel should be justifiably contrasted with her fourth letter to Margaret written from abroad (Ch. XXXIV). It is a cold, formal letter which she herself describes as 'a tiresome letter'. The narrator introduces the letter with the following comments :

"It was a disquieting letter, though the opening was affectionate and sane." [273]

Earlier, her letters are described as striking "an indeterminate note". It is notable that the note she left for Leonard, was 'tender and hysterical' in tone. During her stay abroad her letters became 'colourless' according to Margaret. In Chapter XXXVII the narrator describes her as "She was the Helen who had written the memorable letters four years ago".

These "memorable letters", in the opening chapter, however, read differently when we read them for the second time in the light of the whole novel. Then the ironies, the symbols, the images and the metaphors become fully effective. Yet even at the first reading there are sufficient linguistic as well as stylistic clues which would make us expect these to be significant, which would impress them on our minds so that we will recall them from time to time as we go on with our first reading

In the opening paragraph of the first letter Helen conveys to Margaret in a plain, direct, conversational style her own impression of Howards End and hastens to rectify their pre-conceived notion about the house, which is belied by her actual visit to the place.

In the second paragraph of the letter, the reference to the 'wych-elm' which she 'already loves', is significant. The wych-elm, with its constant suggestion of companionship, is referred to throughout the novel, with associations of friendship and intimacy; under the 'vast column of the wych-elm' Paul and Helen stood, under that 'wych-elm' Helen wishes to camp out with her sister, even the two sisters sat and talked under that tree as they met after a long separation, and this is the wych-elm with 'pig's teeth' in it, about which Mrs. Wilcox talked to Margaret Schlegel. Mr. Wilcox refers to it while describing the house as one of the converted farms in Chapter XV, and again in a conversation with Margaret and Helen in Chapter XXII, he expresses his desire to preserve 'the fine wych-elm'. Mr. Wilcox seems to recognize, in a vague and distant manner, that the wych-elm is fine; but, characteristically, he never noticed the 'pig's teeth' in the tree, nor did Mrs. Wilcox ever tell him about them (206). In the last chapter of the novel, the wych-elm is there, now become a symbol of everything noble and valued by the past, yet tragic in its precarious existence in the face of almost inevitable doom:

"Every westerly gale might blow the wych-elm down and so she (Margaret) could not read to talk during a westerly gale."
(326)

Thus the wych-elm is a recurrent element, a *leit-motif* in the novel. Repetition of this kind is a well-known stylistic device for foregrounding important elements.¹⁵ This is a device often employed by Forster.

Helen's first letter exclaims — 'Oh, the beautiful vine-leaves! The house is covered with a vine'. The vine recurs throughout the novel. It is possibly a symbol of sensuous life. Towards the end of the novel, Margaret sees Helen after a long time,—

'Only her head and shoulders were visible. She sat framed in the vine, and one of her hands played with the buds. The wind ruffled her hair, the sun glorified it; she was as she had always been.' (282)

But she was changed in another way, she was now with child. And the vine now becomes associated with fruition. The description of Helen, quoted above, suggests a picture, almost a piece of classical sculpture, and the vine with the wind and the sun faintly recall Bacchus.

The description of Mrs. Wilcox, 'trailing', is practically imprinted in the reader's mind by re-iteration. She is not 'trailing in beautiful dresses down long corridors' as the Schlegel-sisters had 'settled' that she would be, but trailing in a long dress over 'the slopping grass'—*"trail, trail, went her long dress over the slopping grass"*, and she *"reappears, trail, trail, still smelling hay and looking at the flowers"*. In the second chapter, as she intervenes and settles the problem of Helen and Paul, she is described by the narrator as *"trailing noiselessly over the lawn"* and *"stooping down to smell a rose"*; and here she is described by Helen as *"smelling the red poppies"*. This casual gesture evokes the very spirit of Mrs. Wilcox and as the wheel comes full circle, in the concluding chapter, Forster describes the march of time in the following lines :

"The great red poppies were re-opening in the garden. July would follow with the little red poppies among the wheat...."
(326)

Even the phrase 'city's trail' (Ch. XIV) in Forster's description of England, reveals how several words are deliberately woven into the very texture of his prose. The poppies symbolise 'oblivion', 'sleep' or 'forgetfulness' and here the 'red poppies' acquire greater effect if seen in the light of Leonard Bast's meditations in Chapter XLI of the novel :

"Death alone still charmed him, with her lap of poppies, on which all men shall sleep." [310]

In the third paragraph of the letter, the term 'hay-fever' is introduced ; a few lines later, Mrs. Wilcox is described as 'smelling hay', with her hands full of the hay that was cut yesterday. Helen's reference to Tibby's hay-fever is also significant. In her second letter she laughs at the Wilcoxes for 'catching hay-fever'. It seems to be suggested that people who catch hay-fever are dissociated from natural life, and, in spite of all the other qualities they may have, they are slightly ridiculous. Mrs. Wilcox reappears in the second

chapter with a 'wisp of hay' in her hand ; the phrase occurs later again in Margaret's meditations on the death of Leonard Bast and it is remarkable that the novel ends when it is 'hay-time' with Helen jubilant over the cutting of hay.¹⁶

Even the simile of a 'rabbit-warren' used by Helen in her second letter, seems to be deliberate ; for she has already referred to 'rabbits' for which the hay was cut. Later in the novel Leonard is described by the narrator as entering his flat 'like a rabbit entering its hole' and Margaret sees the clerks' cells in Henry Wilcox's office as 'rabbit-hutches' ; the word also occurs in the closing chapter in the conversation between Helen and Tom.

Such words scattered throughout the novel are stylistic cues to the author's implicit subject. The wych-elm, 'hay' and 'hay-fever', 'Howards End'—the house with its allied associations, the 'vineyard', 'the greengage tree', 'the red poppies', 'the great hedge of dog-roses', 'rabbit-warren'—are unobtrusively driven into the reader's mind and all these symbols, images and notions become fully effective, as one proceeds, in the light of the whole novel.

On another level, the first two letters anticipate two key-themes of the novel—first, the Wilcox values as opposed to the Schlegel values and the essential incongruity between the house and the Wilcoxes. In the first letter Helen is intent on rectifying her wrong notion of the Wilcoxes, (...*"because we associate them with expensive hotels"*...etc.) and immediately later she writes : *"Men like the Wilcoxes would do Tibby a power of good"* or, *"they put everything to use"*—thus emphasising their practical, utilitarian outlook. In her second letter, she elaborates on the Wilcox ideals and values and adds that she is 'ashamed' of herself and all her previous ideas are 'knocked to pieces' ; her inability *'to point to a time when men had been equal'* is resounded later in the novel, in her resentful conversation with Henry Wilcox (Ch. XXII). Thus, quite unawares, the readers are directed to the core of the main theme of the novel—the opposition between the Schlegels and the Wilcoxes, the polarities being Art or Literature, and Commerce ; Refinement, and Obtuseness ; country and city ; the past, and the present ; the world of 'personal relationships', and the world of 'telegrams and anger.' The letters have an air of intimate conversation, marked by a litter of dashes, questions and exclamations.

V

Meir Sternberg, in an interesting article entitled 'What is Exposition?'¹⁷ attempts to answer the question asked in his title. The points made by him which are relevant for our purpose are, briefly :

1. 'It is the function of exposition to introduce the reader into an unfamiliar world, the fictive world of the story, by providing him with the general and specific background information indispensable to the understanding of what happens in it...' (pp. 25-6).
2. 'Writers as a rule take the necessary precautions to render each of their works as expositively autonomous as possible. ... [Coleridge's phrase,] each work must contain within itself the reason why it is so and not otherwise.'
3. The author may choose to plunge *in medias res* or to distribute the expositional material throughout the work. (41)
4. 'The initial situation' is followed by the 'discriminated occasion'. (56)

Is Forster's opening chapter the Exposition of the novel 'Howards End'? The opening chapter is certainly an important part of the exposition in so far as it gives the reader adequate information (as it has already been demonstrated) regarding the house, the Wilcoxes as seen by Helen at this point, the Schlegel sisters and the Schlegel-Wilcox polarity.

But the letters do not constitute the whole Exposition. In fact this chapter does not show us Margaret. We merely catch a few vague notions about her. Equally, Mrs Wilcox is a very shadowy presence here "trailing, trailing...". And the third letter is so abrupt, so much like a telegram, that it is the signal of a crisis. Leonard Bast, one of the five really important characters (Margaret, Helen, Mrs Wilcox, Henry Wilcox and Leonard Bast), is not even mentioned in the novel until Chapter V, and Chapter VI is all about him.

Forster, therefore, may be said to have distributed his Exposition over several chapters. It is perhaps better to use the term '*Prelude*'

for this opening chapter. Oliver Stallybrass's Introduction to the Penguin Modern Classics Edition of the novel quotes the following entry for 26 June 1908 in Forster's diary :

'Idea for another novel shaping and may do well to write it down. In a prelude Helen goes to stop with the Wilcoxes, gets engaged to the son and breaks it off immediately, for her instinct sees the spiritual cleavage between the families.'

The breaking off of the engagement may be considered to be the 'discriminating occasion' as defined by Sternberg. The news of the break is given at the end of Chapter II, after some more exposition has been given through the conversation between Margaret and Mrs Munt, and through the omniscient narrator not only narrating what was going on in Margaret's mind, but, quite deliberately, intruding himself in the first person ['I hope that it will not set the reader against her (Margaret)... let me hasten to add .. (p. 27)]. This second chapter is about Margaret, and here Margaret assumes her position as the central consciousness of the the novel.

The background of the Schlegels is not given until the later part of Chapter IV in the section beginning, 'A word about their origin.' (42-44)

The term '*Prelude*' seems to be apt, because, besides Forster's explicit statements in the eighth chapter of *Aspects of the Novel* about music and the novel being parallel, in *Howards End* itself there are many indications that Forster was thinking in terms of a musical composition here. He uses the term 'interlude', for example, for Chapter XXI of the novel. And, of course, there is the famous Chapter V about Beethoven's Fifth Symphony.

VI

An even more useful metaphor which modern critics of the novel have borrowed from music is that of the *leit-motif*. But it would seem that the term is not always used with precision or consistency. It is sometimes used to signify what should better be called the leading or dominant 'theme'. Technically, the term 'leit-motif' should perhaps mean 'guiding theme'—a figure, melody, or harmony in music,—a scene, object or phrase in a novel—associated with a person or an idea throughout a composition. In western music the

term 'leit-motif' is particularly associated with Wagner. Leit-motifs would, of course, be marked by recurrence.

Oliver Stallybrass, in his Introduction to *Howards End*, suggests that 'money' is one of the leitmotifs of the novel, and connects this with an entry in Forster's diary ('One further leitmotif of *Howards End* deserves mention here as the subject of diary entries'). D. S. Savage is more assertive :

'(The) focal point of the novel... is money. Hardly are the Schlegels introduced before the subject of their investments is touched upon. Money, indeed, is the *leit-motif* which accompanies the Schlegels throughout the book.'¹⁸

These statements are somewhat misleading. Money does not appear as the leit-motif for the Schlegel sisters in the opening chapter of the novel. Money is, indeed, a subject for much discussion and does lead to some uncomfortable introspection in the novel. But it never acquires the status of a leit-motif. It is never realized in any concrete image. If money is to be associated with any character or characters of the novel, it must be the Wilcoxes or one of them. But there again stronger and more effective images are associated with them, money being a kind of backdrop. For these reasons we would also hesitate to agree with Stallybrass that money is one of the leit-motifs of the novel, if not of the Schlegel sisters.

The leit-motif that does appear in the opening chapter is 'hay'. It is the leit-motif for Mrs Wilcox. Savage misses the point of the leitmotif device when he refers to 'Mrs. Wilcox with her tiresome wisp of hay'. E. K. Brown refers to the 'hay-rhythm' as one of the principal 'rhythms' in *Howards End*,—'rhythm' being Forster's own term for the device of leitmotif.¹⁹ This hay-rhythm appears at significant points and a certain degree of completion is achieved as the novel closes with the description of Helen's boy playing in the hay. This particular leit-motif, structurally integral, is most effectively stylized in order to reinforce, support and highlight some of his important ideas. It accretes meaning from the succession of contexts in which it occurs.

It has also been demonstrated how 'vine-leaves' and 'vine' occur as link words at many points of the novel and how 'the wych-elm',

'the pig's teeth' are link-words associated with the main theme of '*Howards End*'.

The working of the Forsterian 'leit-motif' is akin to that in music or more specifically to what he calls 'rhythm'. The Forsterian concept of rhythm is akin to the device of 'leit-motif' in the sense that rhythm, as viewed by him, is not like the Wagnerian leit-motif; it does not reveal characters or anticipate situations, but it is organic, though not really a symbol yet always clearly recognizable. It has been described as 'repetition with variation', but Burra quite pertinently observes :

"What Forster calls rhythm, might more aptly be named leit-motif".²⁰

Towards the end of *Aspects of the Novel* Forster discusses at length this particular quality of fiction, that is, "rhythm", and in the light of these remarks and due to the musical effect which comes through his use of repetition with variation, his novels might be said to aspire to the condition of music. Rhythm can be of two kinds—one that one can tap to and the one, one cannot but which some can hear. To recall Forster : "The little phrase crosses the book again and again, but as an echo, a memory..."²¹ The function of rhythm in fiction is to fill us with freshness and surprise by its lovely "waxing and waning". The simple kind of rhythm is related to pattern and the deeper rhythm is described by the parallel to Beethoven's Fifth Symphony.

The 'easy' rhythm, consisting of variations upon an image, corresponds to the musical phrase which E. K. Brown in his study of Forster's fiction, calls the 'expanding symbol'²² and the 'difficult' rhythm corresponds to the relations of the 'major blocks of sounds' in a symphony. In the first chapter of the novel, as it has already been discussed, Forster has introduced a number of link-words and rhythmic phrases and his own critical theory of rhythm does provide an insight into his practice in his own fiction.

In *Howards End* the device has another important stylistic function as well. The rhetoric of fiction is primarily concerned to make the world it creates *seem* real, within each individual novel's terms of reference. As manipulated by Forster, these leitmotifs perform this function quite effectively. This sort of employment helps

to create pattern, to point up significances and to express areas of experience. Later in the novel, these reiterative phrases, the key-motifs, will often assist the reader in identifying the narrative voice and in minimising the confusion between two voices. For as the novel proceeds, the phrases and ideas recur, radiating associated ideas, meanings; understandings accrue gradually. Each time the motif appears, its appearance brings together in one's mind other situations, other experiences, so that they reverberate, and as they reverberate, one keeps on revising and re-ordering one's understanding of what is happening, of what has happened. In this manner, these key-phrases appearing repeatedly in various aspects give the leit-motif considerable force in conditioning the reader.

VII

The main theme of the novel—the synthesis of polarities concretized through the opposition between the Schlegels and the Wilcoxes, is anticipated in the opening chapter of the novel. Helen explicitly declares that the Schlegel values and beliefs are opposed to those of the Wilcoxes and points out her temporary disillusionment with the former.

The upshot of Helen's description is that the house and the Wilcoxes are incongruous—which is also an allied theme that develops later; the house is associated with country-life, permanence, the past, and tradition, whereas the Wilcoxes are associated with commerce, city life, the accelerating wheels of civilization. Thus Helen's letters, apart from foreshadowing the main theme of the novel, are also suggestive of various nuances of many other related motifs of the novel.

The opening line of the novel highlights the narrative stance of the novel; and the three letters which follow, introduce major themes, major images, many key-words, certain major characters and partially evoke the mysterious spirit of Mrs Wilcox, in a highly rapid and compressed epistolary style. The third letter is remarkable in its terse brevity, it is almost a shock.

The letters also accelerate the action without any jar on the reader's sensibility; Helen seems to change her views, her own world of ideas is 'knocked to pieces', she is deeply impressed by the

Wilcoxes and abruptly falls in love with Paul—the younger Wilcox. These sudden flashes, without any permanent value for Helen, yet turn out to be of great importance in the light of later events. Thus the entire opening chapter provides the reader with a framework for the novel, with possible lines of vision as to the theme of the novel which can be comprehended better in the light of the stylistic cues introduced here.

In conclusion, one may recall Vernon Lee's words which, in a manner, echo E. M. Forster's own remarks on the analogy between music and fiction :

The novel should be written like a symphony or an opera, with interesting leit-motifs producing related effects in the reader. ... The construction of a whole book stands to the construction of a single sentence as the greatest complexities of counterpoint and orchestration stand to the relation of the vibration constituting a single 'just note'.^{1,2}

Forster's opening sentence strikes a 'just note'. The rest of the chapter—the three letters—constitute a composition of many 'just notes' which reappear and enter into other compositions, striving towards a harmony.

REFERENCES

The Penguin Modern Classics Edition of *Howards End*, edited by Oliver Stallybrass, has been used for all quotations from the novel, and the relevant page number given in square brackets at the end of each quotation.

1. Roger Fowler, *Understanding Language*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974, p 249. The term 'referential' probably originated with I. A. Richards—*Principles of Literary Criticism*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1924, Ch XXXIV, although present-day writers on the subject would not entirely agree with Richards's statement that the 'referential' and the 'emotive' are 'two totally distinct uses of language'.
2. H. G. Widdowson, *Stylistics and the Teaching of Literature*, Longman, 1975, Ch I.
3. Roger Fowler, op. cit., pp 250-1. "Language in interpersonal functions may be one-sided, with dominant focus on either the speaker or the audience. The former use is the *expressive*, the later the *conative*. Expressive language highlights the role of the speaker/writer."—p 251.

4. "Literature is distinguished from other varieties of linguistic activity above all by the number and the importance of the deviant feature it contains." "... my choice of the adjective 'deviant' to characterize an essential (perhaps *the* essential) feature of literary language..." —G N Leech, 'Linguistics and the Figures of Rhetoric', *Essays on Style and Language*, ed. Roger Fowler, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966, p 140, 141; Widdowson, op. cit, Ch II; see also summary of Roman Jakobson's concept of 'disorder' in Robert Scholes, *Structuralism in Literature*, Yale Univ. Press, Pbk edn, 1974, pp 19-33.
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9. Mark Schorer, op. cit, p 69 & p 82.
10. Trilling, op. cit, p 12.
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12. E. M. Forster, *Room With a View*, Penguin edn, 1955, p 3.
13. Ibid, p 5.
14. Walter Allen, in Halperin, op. cit. p 327, 329.
15. For a brief but very useful discussion of the concept of 'foregrounding', see G. N. Leech, *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry*, Longman, 1969, Ch 4. David Lodge, *The Language of Fiction*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966, pp 82-7, deals with certain objections to the use of 'repetition' as evidence in literary criticism.
16. Curiously, D. S. Savage finds Mrs Wilcox's 'wisp of hay' tiresome: "...the mundanely 'mysterious' figure of the first Mrs. Wilcox with her tiresome wisp of hay..." —D. S. Savage, *The Withered Branch*, Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1950, p 65.
17. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*, pp 160-4.
18. Stallybrass, Intro to *Howards End*, p 11. D. S. Savage, op. cit, p 58.

19. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*, p 162. E. K. Brown, *Rhythm in the Novel*, Univ. of Toronto Press, 1950, pp 46-51.
20. Peter Burra : Introduction to the Everyman Library edition of Forster's *A Passage to India*—reprinted in E. M. Forster, *A Collection of Critical Essays* ed. Malcolm Bradbury, Prentice-Hall of India, 1979, p 25.
21. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*, p 164.
22. E, K. Brown, op. cit, p 6.
23. Vernon Lee — "Handling of Words", Halperin, op. cit., p 387.

KENNETH MUIR'S EDITION OF 'KING LEAR':
A FEW QUESTIONS

JYOTI BHATTACHARYA

PROF. Kenneth Muir's edition of *King Lear* in the New Arden series is undoubtedly the best available edition of the play for use in our universities. The play is prescribed reading for post-graduate students in many of our universities, and most of us would recommend this particular edition. First published in 1952, the edition was revised with minor improvements in 1972 and has been reprinted many times.

It will not be easy to replace this edition by any other. The introduction with the critical apparatus, the notes and comments, and the appendices are so thorough and so compact in shape, and the size of the volume is so right, that major improvements would seem to be unlikely for a long time. One can of course visualise a massive volume containing everything given by Muir and much more that could be relevant and useful. But an edition which can be frequently used by teachers and students and carried into the classrooms and lecture-halls should not be much bigger than the one we have. It seems that this one will be read and referred to by us for a long time yet.

That is why it seems desirable, although venturesome, to question a few details which, in my view, appear to constitute a flaw. Prof. Muir is one of those who have taught us to feel the great power of the play. Some of us have learned to feel passionately about the play, and, consequently, one's feelings about even minor details tend to be rather strong.

●

1. I question Prof. Muir's reading of the phrase 'Although our last and least' in I. i. 83. Muir's 1952 edition gave

Although our last, and least ;

The textual footnote cited the Folio reading—

Although our last and least ;

—showing no comma after 'last'. The Quarto reading—

Although the last, not least

and Pope's reading—

Although our last, not least

were also cited. The note gave sound and well-known reasons for rejecting the Quarto and accepting the Folio reading. Yet, in the body of the text the comma was taken from the Quarto.

The printer's devil seems to have been at work somewhere. In the 1972 revised edition the textual footnotes at this point definitely show the devil at work. The citation of the Folio reading of the phrase is a definite misprint with a comma. There is no comma in the Folio text.

A poor little comma, which we might ignore? Unfortunately, Muir's gloss on the phrase shows that he had the comma in his mind. He interprets the passage as Lear making two statements about Cordelia; (1) Cordelia is his 'last', that is, his youngest child; and (2) Cordelia is 'small in stature', smallest of the three daughters. A number of other commentators also are of this view. The New Cambridge Duthie-Wilson edition, for example, after interpreting the phrase as 'latest born and least in precedence', concedes that '*least*, probably refers also to Cordelia's stature'.

This idea of Cordelia being physically small, I find rather disconcerting. If we keep the theatre in our minds, we should feel that for a stage-reference of this kind to the physical size of a person, the size has to be quite unusual, somewhat odd. Cordelia has to be unusually small if we are to accept Muir's gloss here. I cannot quite visualise a dwarfish Cordelia.

Some people find this idea rather satisfying. The play presents many opposed polarities: King and Beggar, Young and Old, Rich and Poor, Wise and Fool, etc. A very small Cordelia confronting a big Lear, a frail little girl against a grand and mighty king and father, would seem to be peculiarly apt here. But, I am afraid, we cannot use this fancy. The theatre will not allow this. If we want to retain this fancy, the theatre will call for a different play to be written around it.

I think that the Folio reading here should be accepted, and no comma inserted after 'last'. I feel that we should read the phrase as a single statement—the two adjectives 'last and least' giving a single meaning 'youngest'. I would take 'last and least' as one of those alliterative reduplicative phrases not uncommon in English—'spick and span', 'stout and strong', 'safe and sound', 'free and frank', 'bag and baggage', 'part and parcel', 'rack and ruin', 'bleak and bare' etc. We might also recall that using two words for one meaning is a feature of Shakespeare's language ; we recall '*the book and volume of my brain*' from *Hamlet*, and the famous '*Th'inaudible and noiseless foot of Time*' from *All's Well*.

I am not asserting that this is the one and only correct interpretation. But I think that the gloss on the phrase should suggest this possibility.

2. I question Prof. Muir's gloss on the line

'By what yourself too late have said and done'

in Goneril's speech at I. iv. 215. Let us quote this part of Goneril's speech. Goneril is speaking to Lear at the beginning of the quarrel. She has objected to the levity of the Fool and has alleged that other members of Lear's retinue are equally insolent, and, moreover, rowdy and riotous. Then she says :

Sir,

*I had thought, by making this well known unto you,
To have found a safe redress : but now grow fearful,
By what yourself too late have said and done,
That you protect this course, and put it on
By your allowance ; *

Prof. Muir's note on the phrase 'too late' reads : 'Lear has been tardy in reproving his retinue'.

Now, this is quite wrong. There is no indication that Lear has ever rebuked his retinue. Goneril's accusation is more serious. She is saying that at one time she had thought that the rowdy members of Lear's retinue were misbehaving without Lear's knowledge, and, therefore, a complaint against them made to Lear would perhaps bring about an improvement. But Lear's own recent behaviour makes her suspect that Lear is actually encouraging the misbehaviour of his

retinue. Her accusation is not that Lear has said and done something too late to be of any use, but that Lear himself has only very recently said and done something objectionable. The word 'late' here means 'recently' and not 'after the appropriate or appointed time'.

We were told in the preceding short scene (I. iii) what this something was that Lear did recently. That scene—these two scenes should run together without a break—started with Goneril asking Oswald, "*Did my father strike my gentleman for chiding of his Fool ?*"

I should mention that the Duthie-Wilson edition note on the phrase '*too late*' explains it as meaning 'only too recently', which I think is correct.

For a while I had been toying with the idea that perhaps we should read the line as '*By what yourself too, late, have said and done*'. That would perhaps avoid all confusion. But the stressed 'self' in '*yourself*' makes another intensifier unnecessary. The use of 'too' here may be compared with Othello's '*one that lov'd not wisely, but too well*'.

3. I also venture to question Prof. Muir's gloss on the word '*tends*' in II. iv. 102. The word occurs in the following context :

After arriving in Gloucester's castle, and infuriated by the sight of his devoted servant put in stocks, Lear is demanding that Regan and the Duke of Cornwall come out of their rooms to see him at once. He is furious with Gloucester who has said that he has 'so inform'd them'. Lear thunders—

Inform'd them ! Dost thou understand me, man ?

The frightened Gloucester's feeble response is—

Ay, my good Lord.

Lear continues—

*The King would speak with Cornwall ; the dear father
Would with his daughter speak, commands, tends service :
Are they inform'd of this ?*

As Muir's textual footnote shows, '*commands, tends*' is the Folio reading ; an uncorrected Quarto reading is '*come and tends*' which is obviously wrong : a corrected Quarto and subsequent Quartos read '*commands her service*'.

The Duthie-Wilson edition adopts the corrected Quarto reading and cites Alice Walker who felt that '*commands her service*' would be 'more fitting to the context'. Kenneth Muir argues that "*commands her service* could not have been in the copy, for the original compositor could not have misread *her* as *tends*." This, I think, is convincing.

But there seems to be a problem with the word '*tends*'. Muir's comment shows that there is a controversy about its meaning. Muir writes—"Although F here may have been printed from an uncorrected [Quarto] sheet, and *tends* may therefore be a reproduction of a Q error, the word makes sense. Schmidt suggests that it is an aphetic form of *attends*: Greg, that it means *offers*. Lear commands her service, tenders his own; and this may be taken as a conciliatory afterthought, or as an ironical reinforcement of his words."

I must reject any idea of 'a conciliatory afterthought' at this point of Lear's speech. The conciliatory afterthought comes suddenly at line 105 with a sharp fall of temper and tone—

Tell the hot Duke that—

No, but not yet; may be he is not well: (105)

Those 19 lines of dramatic verse spoken by Lear, from 101 to 119, constitute breath-taking drama. Mrs Winifred Nowottny wrote at length on this particular speech in her essay 'Some Aspects of the Style of *King Lear*' (—*Shakespeare Survey*, 13, 1960). The point here is the sharp oscillation between fierce anger and desperate attempts to remain cool and to be 'reasonable'. In line 102 Lear is a volcano starting to erupt. In line 105 the fires are pushed down. There cannot be any 'conciliatory afterthought' in line 102.

For the same reasons I would also reject the idea of 'irony' in the word '*tends*'. At this point Lear is incapable of saying that he is 'offering' his service—that kind of controlled irony is just not possible for him here. There is heavy sarcasm of vast anger and contempt in the next line—

Fiery! the fiery Duke! Tell the hot Duke that—

and this breaks off, and Lear falls into

No, but not yet;...

The Oxford English Dictionary records that one meaning of the word 'tend' was 'wait in expectation', and refers to Shakespeare. The

Latin verb *tengo* which is probably the root for the English 'tend' did, as Lewis and Short show, sometimes mean 'to command'; 'to insist' is another possible meaning recorded by Lewis and Short.

I would suggest that '*tends*' here is an emphatic repetition of the meaning of '*commands*'. It may also mean that Lear is saying: 'I am commanding, and I am waiting for my command to be obeyed at once.'

I have said that Muir's reason for rejecting the Corrected Quarto's *commands her service* is convincing. Alice Walker's argument that *commands her service* is 'more fitting to the context' overlooks the Duke of Cornwall. On that argument we should have *commands their service*. The Duthie-Wilson note cites Alexander's emendation *commands their service* and says that it is 'equally good'.

It would be sad if editors at this point replace the word '*tends*' by '*her*' or '*their*'. There would be a loss of an important phonetic quality. The imperious resonance of sound in '*commands, tends service*' is exactly what is needed here. It is the Royal Lear speaking, the Lear whose first words were: "*Attend the lords of France and Burgundy, Gloucester*". That *-nd-* cluster is valuable.

4. I am not sure about Prof. Muir's intention in the comment he makes in the footnote to IV. vi. 288. The line is spoken by Edgar to the blinded Gloucester after they hear the sound of battle-drums approaching. Edgar says—

*Give me your hand ;
Far off, methinks, I hear the beaten drum.
Come, father, I'll bestow you with a friend.*

Prof. Muir comments on the word '*friend*': "We are not told how the fugitive Edgar has got in touch with a friend." We cannot but recall from Prof. Muir's Introduction to the play some of his own brilliantly flippant answers to Prof. Bradley. There, after dealing with and dismissing some of the "alleged theatrical weaknesses" of the play mentioned by Bradley, Muir adds in a footnote: "Bradley has other perplexities to which I append short answers". I shall quote only two of these short answers.

One of Bradley's 'perplexities' was, as given by Muir, "(2) Lear speaks of having to dismiss fifty followers, though Goneril has not mentioned a number". Muir's short answer is—"Perhaps Lear hears

during his brief absence from the stage that Goneril had dismissed half his train before consulting him on the matter : or may be he is a telepathist."

I find this last sentence most refreshing. This is the sort of remark that one treasures all one's life.

Another of Bradley's perplexities was—" (5) Why does Shakespeare neglect to tell us about the fate of the Fool ?" Muir's answer is—"There is no particular reason, except novel-readers' insatiable curiosity, why we should be told." That, again, is a very good answer, and, how we wish we could give such answers to all such problems !

But, then, how are we to take Muir's comment, "We are not told how the fugitive Edgar has got in touch with a friend" ? Is this one of Prof. Muir's own perplexities ? Or, did he, in a tongue-in-his-cheek manner, mean that Bradley did not notice this one, and failed to include it among his perplexities, but that this too should be dismissed in the flippant manner which we have so enjoyed ? I would prefer to think that this was not a perplexity for Prof. Muir.

But the question is : Is Prof. Muir right in his exegesis of the sentence "*I'll bestow you with a friend*" ? I venture to think that he is wrong. I think that the sentence need not here mean that Edgar has already found, 'got in touch with', a friend and is taking Gloucester to that friend. The sentence may mean, and should be taken to mean Edgar saying : 'Let's go and look for a person who would be friendly enough to agree to look after you during my absence.' We might remember that Edgar has to go away for a while to see the Duke of Albany in order to hand over to him that letter written by Goneril to Edmund which Edgar had taken from the dead Oswald. We must assume that a friendly person was found who looked after Gloucester during that interval.

5. My last point is about an omission. Prof. Muir does not always indicate that a passage which he prints as verse, either following the Folio or for some other good reason, appeared in the Quarto as prose. IV. vi. 110-120 are irregular verse in the Folio and in Muir's edition. Muir's notes show that they were prose in Quarto. But I. i. 91-3—Cordelia's speech :

*Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave
My heart into my mouth : I love your Majesty
According to my bond ; no more nor less.*

are printed in Muir's edition as verse, and the notes do not indicate that they were printed as prose in the Quarto although the Folio shows them as verse.

I think that the Folio and Muir are right here and the Quarto is probably wrong. Nevertheless, the editorial choice here generates a useful discussion on the nature of dramatic verse and dramatic prose of the Shakespearean kinds, and the editorial note on the choice made should stimulate such a discussion.

The passage is important because this is the first open speech from Cordelia in the play. This speech is preceded by two short 'asides' spoken by her ; the first of them is one sentence in prose ; the second, two and a half lines of verse. These lines Cordelia speaks out, addressing Lear, and answering Lear's demand for a speech of declaration of love.

It is possible to argue that Cordelia is here making a deliberate effort to avoid emotion and to state a plain truth in a plain manner. She deliberately chooses prose here (— if this be correct, this is the second and the last time she speaks prose in the play). However, this kind of speech is difficult for her, and her next speech, more natural for her, more charged with feeling, quickly acquires the rhythm and pattern of dramatic verse. Such a gradual rise from prose to verse, such a stepping-forward after a deliberate withdrawal and shrinking, can be very meaningful, even though the delicate and subtle change may not always be noticed. But in *King Lear* styles of speech are of great importance, and the play almost seems to insist that we listen to the different and changing styles of speech with close attention.

Moreover, in many such cases of verse/prose choice it is very difficult to decide. It is often difficult to distinguish between Shakespearean dramatic prose from Shakespearean dramatic verse. Jespersen, long ago, pointed to the 'proximity of Shakespeare's poetical diction to his ordinary prose' (*Growth & Structure of the English Language*, Ch X). But the rhythm of dramatic prose, not diction only, often came very close to the rhythm of dramatic verse.

Iambic pentameter lines can be made out of lines that are known to have been composed as prose. There is nothing in the syntax of those three lines of Cordelia which would show them unmistakably as verse. We may recall the case of *As You Like It*. Agnes Latham, the editor of the New Arden edition of this play, observes :

"*As You Like It* is distinguished by a high proportion of prose which modulates easily into verse. ...There are times when it is difficult for an editor to decide whether verse or prose is intended and the distinction may not be profound." (—Latham, Intro. *As You Like it*, New Arden Edn, 1975, p xviii)

I shall agree that these are not good and sufficient reasons for rejecting the Folio reading and accepting the Quarto version instead. And, it is always a safe general principle to accept the Folio reading unless there are good and sufficient reasons against it.

But I think that the modern edition should show that there is an editorial choice here.

Note / I am indebted to Prof. S. Nagarajan of the University of Hyderabad for rescuing me from a serious error in my point 2 above. For point 5, I am indebted to Sri Arun K Dasgupta, my colleague in the University of Calcutta ; he drew my attention to the Quarto prose reading of these lines, which I had missed, having relied entirely on Muir's edition ; the idea of Cordelia's gradual rise from prose into verse is also entirely Sri Dasgupta's.

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